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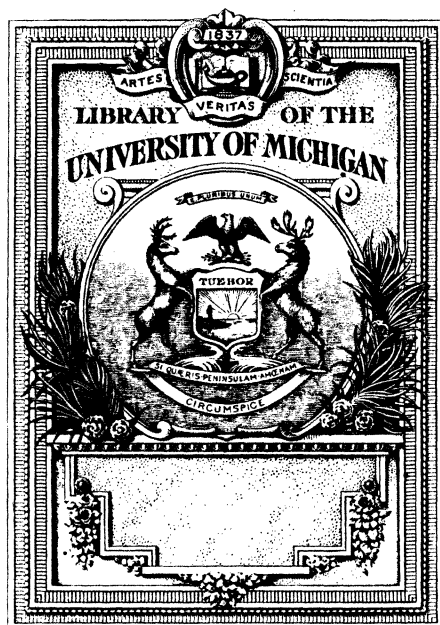
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# THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY  
FOR MEN AND WOMEN



VOL. LIX

DECEMBER 1923 TO MAY 1924

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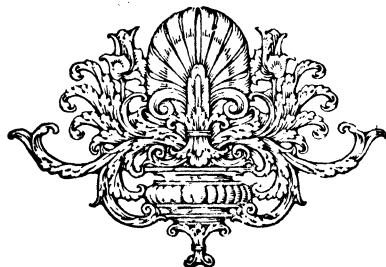
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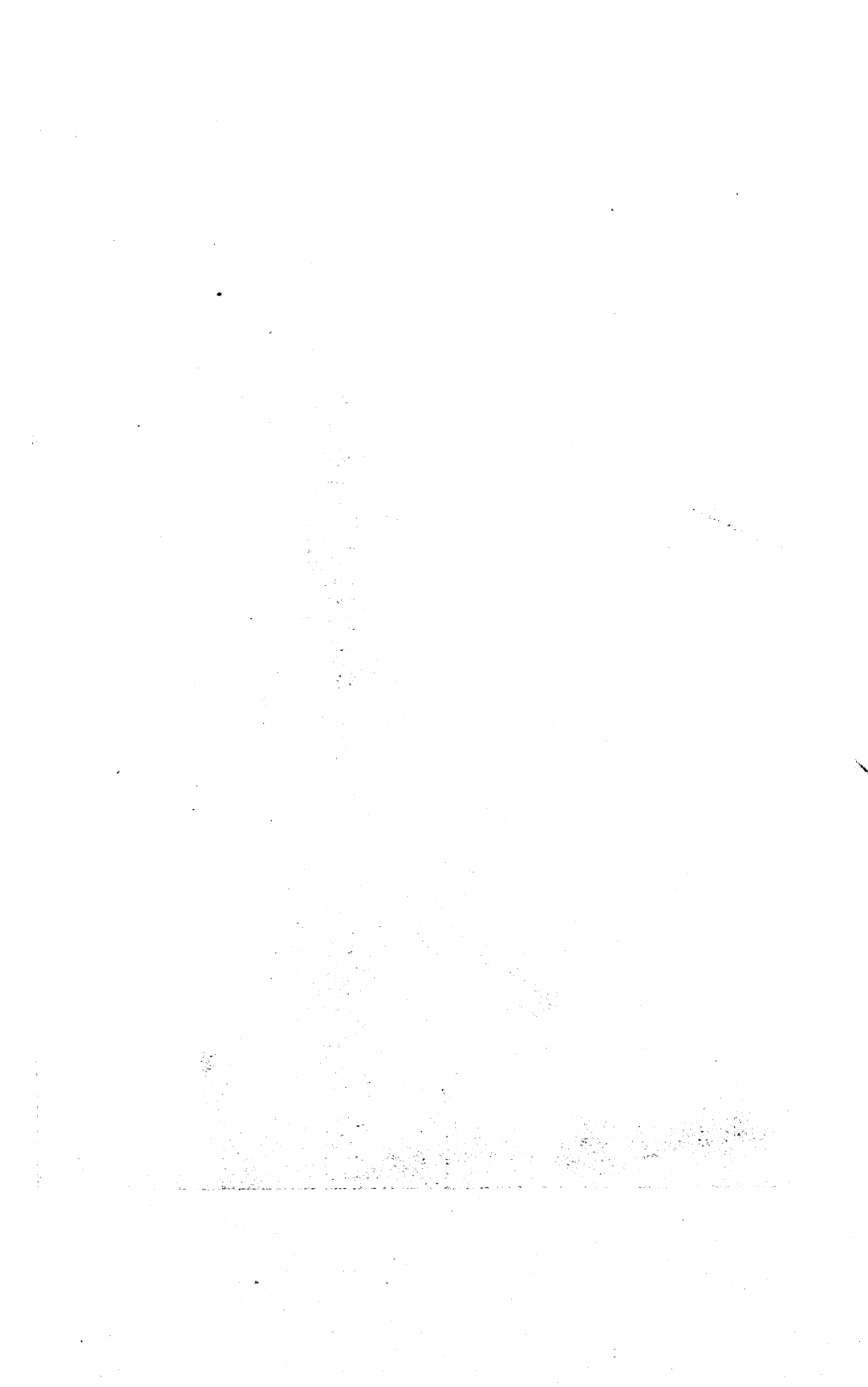
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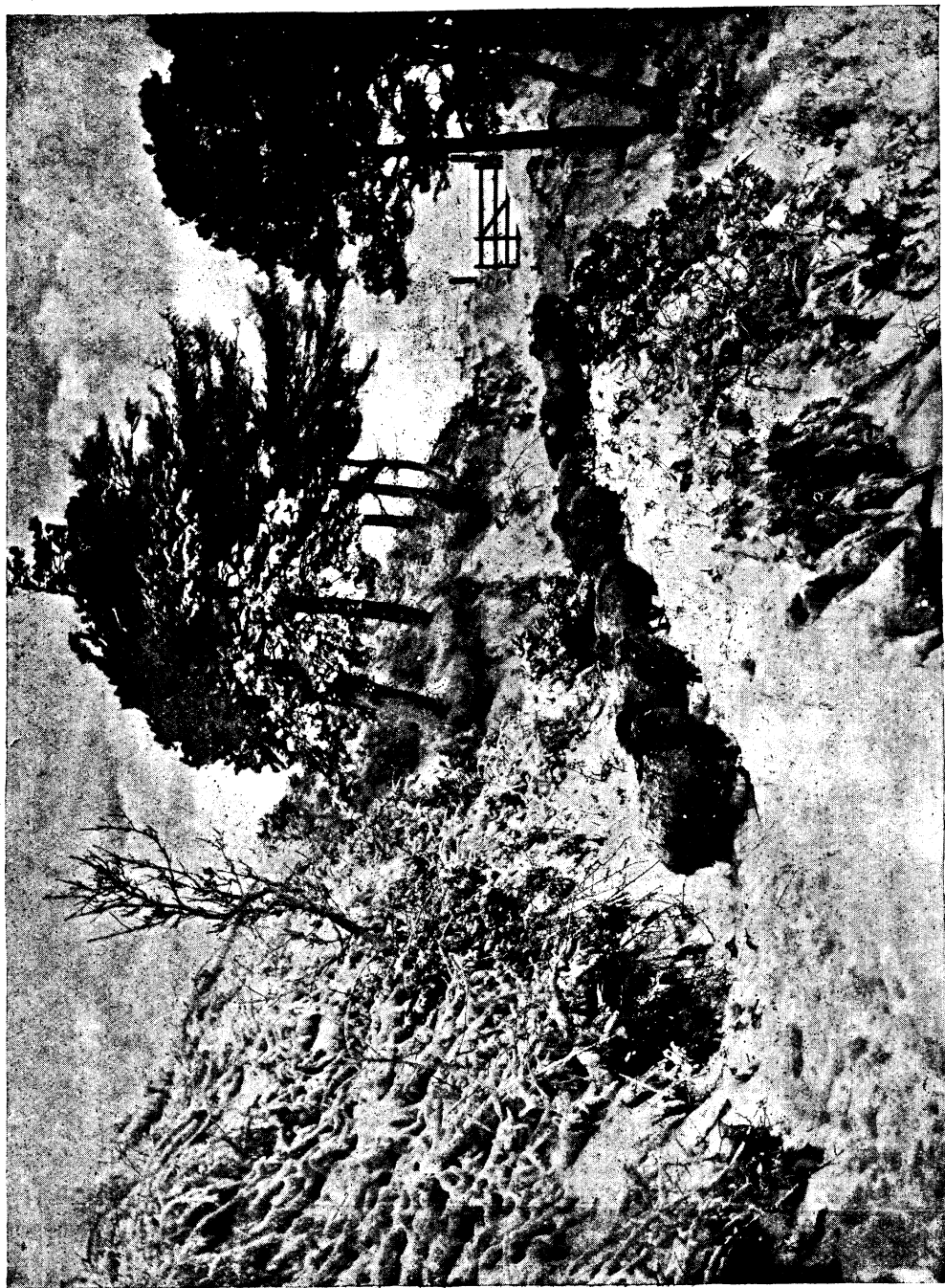
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THE FIRST SNOW. A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY G. B. COWEN.

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““Why I mayn't dine with you to-night  
and announce my engagement to Hilton  
to-morrow morning I fail to see.””

# A DRINK DIVINE

By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of “Valerie French,” “Berry and Co.,” “Jonah and Co.,” “Anthony Lyveden,”  
“The Brother of Daphne,” etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

**T**HOSE who dine at the Richelieu sit over their cups. It is the custom. A dinner at the quiet Duke Street restaurant is never a prelude to an entertainment. It is the entertainment itself. People go there to dine and talk leisurely. The kitchen and the cellar are probably the best in London : the service and the atmosphere are certainly the best in the world. There is an unseen orchestra, which plays so softly that you are just aware of melody while you converse. There is no light but

that shed by table-lamps, so that it is more easy to identify the dish your neighbour is tasting than your neighbour herself. You may be sitting by Royalty : often enough you are. And if you ring up to take a table you will be told that they are all booked—unless the clerk at the bureau knows and respects your name. It is the custom.

Upon the ninth evening of December the elements seemed to have conspired to enhance the Richelieu's charm. Without, a gale was raging. Squall after tearing squall

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flung down the dripping streets, fuming at every obstacle, blustering at every corner, lashing the pitiless rain into a very fury. The latter fell steadily and, with the wind behind it, drove and beat passionately upon a miserable world, harrying, chilling and stinging till such as might gave in and pelted for shelter, while such as might not fought their way through the *mêlée* with tightened lips.

Behind the curtained double-windows of the restaurant only the wilder squalls obtained an audience, but those who sat there had proved the night while they came, and the muffled stutter of the rain and the dull growl of the wind about the casements vividly remembered the malice of the streets.

Little wonder that the comfort of the room entered into the soul.

Lady Elizabeth Crecy set down her glass.

"Degeneration," she announced. "That's my trouble. I'm degenerate. I worship luxury—silks, furs, perfume, shaded lights, deep carpets, shining bathrooms, electric broughams and the rest."

Her host pulled his moustache.

"I've seen you stick it," he said. "I remember a day with the Cottessmore, when——"

"Perhaps. But all hunts lead up to a bath. If there was no hot water, I should never get up on a horse."

"Neither would stacks of people: but that doesn't mean they're degenerate. Cleanliness may be next to Insanity, but it's well meant."

Elizabeth laughed.

"You can get clean with cold water."

"It 'as been done," said Pembury. "I've done it myself. But you can bet your life it wasn't my fault. I bathed in a fountain once — one January day." My lady shuddered. "Exactly. I admit I got clean, but it put me off water for weeks."

"Perhaps," said his guest. "The point is, Dick, that you did it, while I——"

"So would you," said Dick stoutly. "I mean, other things being equal, of course. One or two screens, for instance. You're no more degenerate than I am. The best's good enough for you, of course. And quite right, too. We're all of us out for the very best we can get."

"I've got it to-night, any way."

Thoughtfully the man regarded her beautiful fingers. He may be forgiven. The fierce light of the little table-lamp could find no fault in them.

"Thank you, Dot," he said quietly. Then he gave a light laugh. "But that's because you oughtn't to be here."

"But I ought," said my lady. "It's most appropriate. *Après vous* — the deluge. To-morrow I take the plunge. I'm dining with you for support—ginger. You're my Best Man. If the truth were known, my future husband is probably seeking inspiration at the hands of his best girl."

"I'll bet you've told no one."

"I didn't inform the Press, if that's what you mean. All's fish that comes to Scandal's net. Though why I mayn't dine with you to-night and announce my engagement to Hilton to-morrow morning I fail to see."

"Degeneration," said Pembury. "That's the answer. Not ours—the world's. The blinkin' age is degenerate. People would immediately assume there was something wrong. 'Engaged to one cove,' they'd wheeze, 'an' dinin' out with another? Hul-lo!' And they'd wink an' wag their heads an' lick their thick lips . . . Oh, it makes me tired, Dot. It's made me tired for years. We're not hot stuff, you and I. Then why should be we branded? But we should. If we were charged with stealing, people 'ld shriek with laughter. They know we're honest and they'd know there'd been a mistake. But just hint that we've been forgathering, and our respective reputations 'ld be blown inside out."

My lady regarded the end of her cigarette.

"Yes," she said slowly, "they would. It's bitterly unfair, but they would. But was there an age when they wouldn't?"

"There must have been," said her host. "Besides, things usedn't to be so bad. Everyone's got a muck-rake nowadays. They almost sell 'em at the Stores."

"You haven't," said Lady Elizabeth.

"Neither have you," said the man.

"Perhaps that's why we get on."

Pembury raised his eyebrows.

"It's a tie, certainly," he said. "Still, you and I hit it off before we thought about muck-rakes. I imagine it's bigger than that—a question of taste. We've always had the same tastes. We've always loathed golf——"

"Don't mention the game," wailed Elizabeth. "Hilton's determined to teach me—says the great thing is to learn while you're young."

"—an' loved hunting. We both hate claret and love beer."

"A vulgar taste," said my lady. "Hilton would have a fit. When I can't bear it any



more, you must send me a bottle of Bass by parcel post."

"We're both of us fools about dogs, if we must see a show we like music with a small 'm,' we're both left-handed, we don't know what it is to be sea-sick——"

"I trust Hilton doesn't. Otherwise, the yacht . . ."

Pembury frowned.

"You called me your Best Man just now. Did you mean that, Dot?"

"I did. Why?"

"It gives me a right to say what I'm going to say." Lady Elizabeth stared. "You're not to gird at Hilton before me again. I know you'd never do it before anyone else: and we're such very old friends—we've always discussed everyone—that it's easy enough to forget. But you——"

"Forget what?"

"That we're on a new footing now. Hilton's up on the dais, and I've stepped down."

The girl's eyes narrowed.

"Upon my soul," she said, "I think that beats it. First, you set out to teach me manners: then, you calmly announce that Hilton has usurped your place."

"Hang it, Dot, I never——"

"When you said I oughtn't to have come, you were perfectly right. I oughtn't. I ought never to have come here with you. I thought you could stand corn, and I find you can't. I thought you understood, and I find I was wrong. I tell you now you were never 'up on the dais'—never within miles of it. Because I gave you my friendship, I suppose you thought I cared."

"I did," said Pembury quietly. "It was very presumptuous, but I did. And if I'd had enough to keep you, I'd 've made certain. . . . And now that you know, old lady, have a heart. Forgive me for being clumsy and call it 'Nerves.' I'm like a spoilt child this evening. You've spoiled me by being so nice. And now I know that it's over, I'm kicking against the pricks."

There was a long silence.

At length—

"What's over?" said Lady Elizabeth.

"Act One," said her host shortly. "The spoiling process. My, er, tastes being what they are, I must retire. If you want another reason, Hilton hasn't much use for me. I don't know that I blame him, but that's neither here nor there. He hasn't. And since he hasn't, neither must you. Incidentally, you haven't any way. I said it first."

"You know I have, Dick. You know I have. I'm sorry I burst out just now. You're perfectly right, of course. You always are. To laugh about Hilton to you was shocking form. To turn and rend you because you told me so was painfully cheap. I was wild, because I was guilty. I was guilty, because I was wild."

"Dot, don't——"

"Listen. You say I've spoiled you. What rot! What blazing rot! Why, all my life you've spoiled me. You're spoiling me now. And I'm wild because I know that it ends to-night. 'Nerves'? Yes, if you like. Call it 'Nerves.'" With a queer, dry laugh, she glanced at the watch on her wrist. "I'll have to be going, my dear. Have you got the car?"

"She's in St. James's Square."

"Good." They rose to their feet. "See how I bank on your goodwill. If I were a man, I wouldn't drive a girl home when she'd just told me off across my own table."

"I think you would," said Dick.

John Richard Shere, Viscount Pembury, was thirty-two. He had looked thirty-two for years and was likely to look thirty-two when he was forty. And there you have the man—steady, conservative, faithful. With it all, he was never dull. He was gay, eager, brilliant—could have taken his place anywhere: and his place was high. The tragedy of it was that access to his place was denied him. If his ways were charming, his means were unhappily of no account. What was worse, they would never be anything else. The collapse of Russia had finished the House of Shere. His father had sunk to an annuity and dwelled at a Club. His mother was dead—mercifully. He had sought employment, of course, but his style was against him. Besides, he had been bred to be an earl. He was certainly offered six hundred a year to show motor-cars, but had declined the honour. He was ready to sell his labour, but not his name. His greatest regret was that he would never hunt hounds. Tall, slight, dark, gentle-eyed, he was a man to look twice at. If you did so, you saw the strength of his pleasant mouth and the firm set of his chin. At Oxford, where he had been President of Vincent's, he was known as 'The Velvet Glove.'

Lady Elizabeth Crecy was twenty-nine, dark and gray-eyed. She could, I suppose, have married anyone. Her beauty, her wisdom, her excellence in all she did made three distinct, forcible appeals. I do not



think the man lives who, had she pleased, could have resisted successfully so dazzling a combination. That she did not please made little enough difference. The result was the same. Men fell in love at first sight—and Sir Hilton Shutter among them. People said he had proposed six times.

Shutter believed in living and indulged his belief. He did himself very well—on thirty-five thousand a year. His ocean-going yacht was the last word. He was forty-six years old and had been handsome. He was also the second baronet and had been High Sheriff of Berkshire, in which county his name was respected almost as highly as he respected it himself. He was well-known in London and believed in writing to *The Times*. A letter above his signature appeared about once a month.

Lady Elizabeth Crecy had, in her own right, three hundred and fifty a year.

The wind had died and a fine rain was falling when Pembury turned into King Street in quest of his car. The wet did not stop him from looking the old Rolls over to see that she had taken no hurt. Besides, he feared that rain might have forced an entrance. . . . But the coupé had been built by men who knew their business. Cushions and floor were bone dry. He started the engine and left for the Richelieu at once.

Elizabeth was waiting in the hall—all great fur coat and soft, dark hair and little shining feet—as she had waited before, so many times. As he came into the hall, their eyes met and she smiled—as she had smiled before, so many times. As she stepped into the coupé, an exquisite stocking flashed—as it had flashed before, so many times. . . .

A moment later they were heading West. "Slippery night," said Pembury. "Oughtn't to be, but it is."

"That's the way of the world," said Elizabeth. "It's an irrational age. And Nature's catching the disease."

Neither spoke again till the last turn had been taken and Pembury had berthed the coupé under the shelter of some trees. My lady's home lay further, by twenty paces.

The girl stared.

"Why have you stopped, Dick?"

The other smiled.

"Would you like a drink, Dot?"

Elizabeth caught his arm.

"Not my favourite beverage? I can't bear it."

"The same," laughed Pembury. "In the pocket by your side is an imperial pint of beer—"

"Dick, you darling!"

"—and here"—he produced a silk handkerchief—"is a perfectly good glass. I brought it as a sort of stirrup-cup, just—to show there's no ill feeling. You know. Wash out the good old times an' wash in the new. Come on, old lady. Forward with the bay rum."

In silence the bottle passed. . . .

"Here's your best, Dick," said the girl uncertainly.

She emptied the glass, and Pembury filled it again.

Elizabeth put it aside.

"You drink that, Dick."

"I brought it for you."

"I know. I accept it and give it back. Drink it and wish me luck."

Pembury raised the glass.

"Your best—now and for ever," he said quietly.

He drank, laughed, slid bottle and glass into a pocket and set his foot upon the clutch. . . .

An instant later they were before the broad steps.

At the top of the flight Elizabeth lifted her head.

"You see I'm crying, Dick."

"Yes."

"You've never seen that before."

"Nerves, dear, nerves."

My lady shook her head.

"And it's not the beer, either," she said shakily.

Pembury took off his hat and picked up her hand.

"Good night, Dot," he said and kissed the slight fingers.

These were very cold.

Then he opened her door, and she passed in. . . .

Pembury's rooms were in Brook Street. Thither he drove mechanically, gazing out of the windscreen with a strained, fixed stare.

As he was flying up Park Lane, a taxi shot out of South Street across his path. . . .

Instinctively, he clapped on the brakes, and the Rolls skidded to glory.

Two buses were coming. He could see them.

By a violent effort he straightened the great car up.

Then she skidded again—the opposite way.

He accelerated—tried to get through. . . .

Then a taxi pulled out from behind the second bus. . . . A woman screamed. . . .

With a soft crash, the Rolls came to rest against the taxi's off side.

As collisions go, it was a slight one—a matter of running-boards and wings.

The buses stopped, and their two conductors appeared. In blasphemous terms, the cab-driver called the world to witness that it was not his fault. His fares alighted indignantly. A crowd began to collect. . . .

Then the police came up.]

\* \* \* \* \*

"Were you drunk?" said the Earl, shortly.

"I was not, sir. But just now the police have got drunkenness on the brain."

"What evidence have you?"

"None."

"Who did you dine with?"

"I can't say, sir."

"You mean, you can't drag her in?"

"Exactly."

"For her sake, or ours?"

"Hers."

Lord Larch pointed to a table.

"Give me pen and paper," he said.

Pembury did as he was bid, and the Earl lay back on his pillows and wrote a note.

*Mr. Forsyth,*

*Be good enough to attend to this matter. Lord Pembury was not drunk and so should not be convicted. Call me if you think it advisable.*

*Larch.*

"Take that to Forsyth," he said. "And dine with me here to-night."

"Thank you, sir."

Father and son understood one another perfectly.

The latter went his way and duly surrendered to his bail at eleven o'clock.

Evidence of arrest was given, and then, at Forsyth's request, the case was adjourned.

Some evening papers gave much prominence to the affair. So did some morning papers of the following day. Down in Somerset, with the Fairies, Lady Elizabeth Crecy never saw the reports. Out of regard for her, none of the house-party drew her attention to them. It was known that she and Pembury were very old friends.

As for Pembury himself, the man prayed hourly that, ere the news reached her, the case would be over and done. She was not a reader of news-sheets: she was well out of Town: that anyone would inform her was most unlikely. Of course, she would know

one day, but, with luck, not until it was . . . too late . . . with luck. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Quaritch, of Treasury Counsel, removed his pince-nez.

"The police contend that you were drunk. Three things, they say, corroborate their contention. First, Lord Pembury, you collided with another vehicle. Secondly, you smelt of liquor. Thirdly, a bottle and glass, both of which had recently contained beer, were found in a pocket of your car. Very good. Our answer to the first is that the collision was due to a skid, which was itself due directly to the fact that a taxi shot without warning across your path and indirectly to the fact that you were admittedly driving rather faster than the condition of the streets was warranting. Am I right?"

"Perfectly," said the delinquent.

The lawyer inclined his head.

"Our reply to the second is that, very shortly before the accident happened, you had consumed one half of a small bottle of beer."

"I had."

"Very good. What is our answer to the third?"

Pembury shrugged his shoulders.

"I've no explanation to give. Finding a bottle and glass doesn't prove I was blind."

"It's pretty strong evidence of drinking. Mind you, I *know* you weren't drunk. But we've got to satisfy the Court. What construction will the Court put upon the discovery of that bottle and glass? Assuming the Magistrate is reasonable, he will consider it peculiar. Even if they're addicted to drink, people of your position do not as a rule go about with a glass and a bottle of beer. So, finding the discovery peculiar, the Magistrate will expect an explanation. If you don't give him one, he will very naturally put the worst construction upon those unfortunate utensils."

"What'll he think?"

The lawyer raised his eyebrows.

"I don't know what he'll think. He'll certainly assume that your explanation is not forthcoming because you know very well that it wouldn't assist your case. And if he thinks any further, I suppose he'll class you with the thirsty and prudent undesirable who carries a flask in his pocket wherever he goes."

"And he'll send me down?"

"Wait. The time is late in the evening—

ten-twenty-five. That is the hour when those who do get drunk may be most easily encountered. You have a smash—which

accept the accused's unsupported statement that he was sober?"

"Frankly, I don't think I should."

"Add to all this two scandalously irrelevant facts, which, because the Magistrate is human, will be constantly present to



"Elizabeth took off her pearls and slid an enormous emerald off her finger."

ought to have been avoided. You smell of liquor. Real evidence of liquor, recently consumed, is found. The police say you were drunk. If you were on the Bench, would you

his mind. One is that of late the crater of public indignation upon the subject of drunken drivers has been in violent eruption: the other is that at the present

moment there are hundreds of thousands of people who are simply living for an opportunity of demonstrating that there

is one law for the poor and another for the rich."

"And he'll send me down?"

"I think he will have no alternative."

Lord Pembury laced his fingers and put them behind his head.

"Can't be helped," he said. "I've nothing to say."

Forsyth put in his oar.



"Look here," he said. "The most formidable position we're faced with is that which is erected upon that bottle and glass. If we can reduce that position, the moral effect upon the Magistrate's mind will be precisely as powerful as the position was formidable. You always get most credit for doing what seems to be the hardest thing to do. If you won't explain the presence of those infernal vessels, it's not the slightest good insisting that all you had recently consumed was half a small bottle of beer."

"Well, there's the blinkin' bottle to bear me out. I tell you, I shared it with a friend."

"Then produce the friend."

"I can't," said Pembury.

"Can't?" said Forsyth. "Or 'won't'?"

"Won't."

Forsyth threw up his hands.

Quaritch leaned forward.

"You do see the point, Lord Pembury? The introduction of the friend makes it a shade more palatable, but it doesn't eliminate that distressing element of eccentricity. Is it your practice to, er, sport a bottle of beer? Of course not. Then why did you do it? From hospitable motives? For a wager? Why?"

"I'm not going to say any more," said Viscount Pembury. "I'm sorry to be so graceless. I know you're trying to help me and I'm carefully crampin' your style. But there you are. Please do what you can with what you've got."

There was a long silence.

"He mayn't. . . mayn't be content with a fine, you know," said Forsyth.

"I know. It can't be helped."

Counsel folded his Brief and rose to his feet.

The conference was at an end.

As the door closed behind Pembury—

"Who the devil is he shielding?" said Quaritch.

"I only wish I knew," said Forsyth, bitterly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sir Hilton Shutter was thoroughly pleased with life. For one thing, he was standing with his back to a roaring fire: for another, he was a guest at Castle Charing, a pleasant residence to which he had long hoped to be invited: for another, his future wife, seated on a sofa before him, was looking particularly lovely in a frock of powder-blue and gold: finally, from the solemn, almost subdued demeanour of his host and hostess, he perceived that his discourse was creating a profound impression.

A booming note slid into his voice.

"Leadership. To-day, more than ever before, people require a lead. Point them the way, and they'll move. But you must point it definitely. Your indication must be downright, courageous." He paused to flick his cigar ash into the grate. "I wrote to *The Times* to-day," he continued, frowning.

"Did you?" said his hostess pleasantly. "What about?"

"This question of drunken motorists," was the reply.

Mrs. Fairie started, and her husband's hand flew to his moustache.

"It's more than a public scandal," continued Shutter. "It's a national disgrace. I don't mean——"

"I know," said Fairie nervously. "There's been a lot of agitation about it, but——"

"I agree. But the evil remains."

"Oh, they'll stamp it out," said Fairie. "Trust them. People are beginning to see it's not good enough. By the way——"

"By 'national disgrace,'" said Shutter, "I mean that the failure of the authorities to observe the will of those who appoint and pay them to do their will is a state of affairs which would not be tolerated in any other country in the world."

"I agree," said his host heartily. "It's wicked."

"Monstrous," said Mrs. Fairie. "What about some Bridge?"

"One minute," said Lady Elizabeth. "What's monstrous?"

"This drunkenness stunt," said Fairie. "Let's——"

"No, no, no," cried Shutter. "I thought you didn't quite follow me. My point is that, outrageous as is the offence, the failure of those whose signal duty it is to eradicate it is still more infamous."

"That's the word I was trying to think of," said Fairie. "'Infamous.' So it is. What about roping in the others an' havin' a quiet game of——"

"As I said in my letter to-day," said Sir Hilton, frowning, "the community no longer asks for protection—it demands the abolition of these pests: and that, by the infliction in every case, without fear or favour, of a penalty—imprisonment, of course—so harsh as, once for all, to frighten would-be offenders back into the path of decency."

"You are fierce," said Elizabeth. "Why——"

"Yes, isn't he?" cried Mrs. Fairie. "Never mind. Let's——"

"Isn't it time someone was?" demanded Sir Hilton. "Look at the latest——"

"Ouch!" squealed Fairie, leaping to his feet.

"Whatever's the matter?" cried Elizabeth, considerably startled.

"Must 've sat on a pin or something," said Fairie desperately. "What about that poker? It's much——"

"As I was saying," boomed Shutter, "look at the latest case. There's a man with all the advantages which birth and education can offer——"

"Excuse me, Sir Hilton," blurted Fairie, "but—I know you'll forgive my saying so, but the fellow in question's rather a friend of mine, and——"

"Pembury is?"

"WHO?"

Elizabeth was on her feet, flushed, blazing-eyed.

"Who?" she repeated.

Fairie sank into his seat with a groan.

"Pembury, Elizabeth," said Shutter. "Young Pembury. Haven't you seen the papers?"

"No," said Elizabeth, "I haven't. What do the papers say . . . about . . . Lord Pembury?"

The broad shoulders were shrugged.

"Oh, he's the latest instance of the drunken driver. That's all. I'm not particularly surprised, but——"

"Hang it, man," cried Fairie, "you've no right to——"

"Why aren't you surprised?" said Lady Elizabeth.

Her *fiancé* stared. Then he gave a short laugh.

"Oh, I don't know. But don't let's pursue it. Didn't you hear Fairie say that he's——"

"Does it occur to you that Lord Pembury's a friend of mine?"

"I know he was," said Sir Hilton.

"Is," said Elizabeth. "Is. And always will be. Never mind. Who says he was drunk?"

"The police, dear," said Mrs. Fairie, putting an arm about her waist. "He ran into something—a taxi, on Sunday night——  
*What is it, darling?*"

Elizabeth was trembling violently.

"Nothing," she said. "Nothing. Let me sit down. 'On Sunday night,' you were saying. Yes?"

"On Sunday night, in Park Lane. He wasn't hurt. And the police—you know what they are—immediately jumped to the conclusion——"

"Be just, Mrs. Fairie," said Shutter. "It wasn't a question of jumping to any conclusion. Finding him drunk, they——"

"If you'll forgive my saying so," said Fairie, setting a brandy and soda in Elizabeth's hand, "whether they found him drunk or sober has yet to be decided. At present he's merely charged with being drunk."

"Of course," said Shutter, "if you like to split hairs——"

"It isn't a question of hair-splitting," said his host. "It's a question of cold facts. If the charge is dismissed—as it will be—he could sue you for slander for this, and just waltz home."

Elizabeth was speaking.

"Will somebody please tell me exactly what's happened?"

"I will," said her host. "Dick had a smash late on Sunday night. Nobody was hurt. He was arrested and charged. They say he smelt of liquor and a bottle was found in the car. He appeared on Monday morning and pleaded 'Not guilty.' Evidence of arrest was given and the case was adjourned for a week."

"What's to-day?" said Elizabeth.

"Friday."

"Thank you. Go on."

"That's all, dear," said Mrs. Fairie. "We didn't tell you, because——"

"You did, though, didn't you?" said Elizabeth, looking Sir Hilton in the face.

"I naturally assumed——"

"Quite a hobby of yours, isn't it? Recreations—golf, yachting, assumption. You assumed that he was drunk. You assumed that I knew about it. I suppose you assumed that, in view of my knowledge, I should relish your recent conversation, including the fact that you had written to *The Times*, urging 'the infliction of penalties—imprisonment, of course—so harsh . . .'" She stopped dead there. Then her voice rang out. "*Why did you write that letter?*"

Sir Hilton started.

"'Why'?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Well, er, because, I suppose, I felt——"

"Was it in the hope that it would appear on the day Dick's case came on?"

"Good Heavens, Elizabeth! What——"

"Cut it out," said the girl, quietly. "I know. And so do Madge and Harry. We all three know. And so do you. And I'll tell you another thing we know—we three. We know Dick wasn't drunk."

"Right!" cried the Fairies in a breath.

"And so do you," said Elizabeth, rising.

"Don't be ridiculous," said Shutter. "If I like to——"

The girl stretched out her hand.

"Just hold my drink for a minute, will you?" she said.

Mechanically, Sir Hilton received the glass.

Elizabeth took off her pearls and slid an enormous emerald off her finger. She pitched the gems together at Shutter's feet. Then she looked into his eyes.

"How I came to make such a mistake, I can't conceive. I think I must have been mad. To be perfectly honest, I liked the idea of being rich. As far as you're concerned, I'm not so terribly to blame, because, when you asked me to marry you, you dangled your rotten wealth before my eyes. You prayed it in aid of your suit. And I thought it was good enough, I did. . . . Well, I find I was wrong."

"But, Elizabeth——"

"My good sir, *I wouldn't be seen dead with you.*" She stretched out her hand. "Thank you."

She took the glass from his fingers and flung the liquor in his face.

Sir Hilton recoiled and Madge Fairie started to her feet. Lady Elizabeth and Fairie stood perfectly still.

Floating from behind closed doors, the lilt of the latest fox-trot disputed possession of the silence with the pleasant flare and crackle of the logs in the grate.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What's Mr. Forsyth want?"

"I don't know at all, my lord. He simply told me to find you, wherever you were, and bring you back in a cab to Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Pembury, who was at his tailor's, adjusted his tie.

"All right," he said slowly. "If you'll get a cab, I'll be ready in two minutes' time."

The clerk bowed and withdrew.

Pembury wondered, frowning, what was afoot.

Had Forsyth got hold of something? Had he been making inquiries and come on the truth? Had the Richelieu been talking? Had . . . Forsyth had found out something. Not a doubt of it. Something about Sunday night. And Forsyth was going to try to force his hand. He was going to threaten to put Elizabeth wise. . . .

Pembury smiled a grim smile.

As he entered the lawyer's room——

"Good morning, Dick," said Elizabeth. "Where did they pick you up? I told them to try——"

"Forsyth," said Pembury sternly, "I don't remember instructing you——"

"One minute," cried Forsyth. "One minute. My hands are clean. I haven't moved in the matter. I never found the lady. She found me."

"But——"

"It's perfectly true," said Elizabeth. "I only heard last night. Of course, it's my own fault. I really must read the papers: but they're so frightfully dull—usually."

"Who told you?" said Pembury.

"Hilton, of course. But observe how astute I am. A fool would have rushed to you. The woman of the world goes to a lawyer."

"Why does she do that?"

"Because," said Elizabeth, "it's Saturday, and lawyers are closed at one. By the time I'd had it out with you, the lawyers would have been closed. As it is, we're in just nice time. My statement's being typed now."

"I won't have you called," said Pembury.

"Quite sure?" said Lady Elizabeth.

"Positive. That's flat. You can't be called without my consent, and, short of pressin' me to death, you won't get that."

"But, Dick——"

"My dear, it's no earthly. I'm absolutely resolved. I not only won't call you, but I won't have you near the Court."

He flung himself into a chair and crossed his legs.

"Now, Dick, just listen. Put yourself in my place. Supposing I was charged with something I hadn't done. And everything——"

"Dot," said Pembury, "it's not the slightest good. You know as well as I do that it's a question of sex. What's sauce for the goose may be sauce for the gander—but it can't always be served. For people to know that we were dining 'ld be bad enough, but what about the beer?"

"Well, what about it?" said Dot. "What's the matter with the truth? Remembering my affection for the beverage, you were considerate enough——"

"My dear girl," said Pembury, "it's out of the question. You can't parade intimate nursery incidents in a Court of Law. Possibly, if we were brother and sister——"

"We are, practically. As I was telling Mr. Forsyth——"

"Well, it's not the moment to advertise

it. Forsyth knows that as well as I do. Of course, he's out to pull me out of the muck, but I'm not takin' any. Either I get out myself, or I stay where I am. *I won't have you called.* More. Unless you give me your word not only to hold your tongue, but not to come within a mile of the Joy Shop till it's all over, I'll—I'll plead 'Guilty.' "

Forsyth shifted in his chair.

Lady Elizabeth raised her delicate eyebrows.

"Well, there you are," she said. "If you will cut your own little throat, I can't stop you. Only, I can't marry a man who's been convicted of drunkenness." Pembury leaped to his feet. "I can't, really. You see, I'm funny like that. It's—it's against my principles."

"Dot!" shouted Pembury. "Dot! What on earth d'you mean? You're engaged to——"

"Finish, my dear, finish. I've turned him down. You'll see it in *The Times* on Monday. I just couldn't stick the swine. If we could have lived apart, I might have managed it. But together—no thanks. Charing opened my eyes. I was happy enough there, until he came. Then everything crashed. Better is a cold tub, where love is, than a tiled bathroom and hatred therewith. Don't you agree, Mr. Forsyth?"

"Dot! Dot, my darling, is this a have?"

Pembury had her hands and was gazing into her eyes. The man was transfixed, blazing.

"No," said Elizabeth. "It isn't. It's ordinary, natural love. Don't go, Mr. Forsyth. I'd rather like you to stay. I say it's ordinary love. I've loved you for years, Dick. But when you never spoke, at last I came to the conclusion that you didn't care for me—that way. And so—I turned elsewhere. Not to another man, because there was no other man and never could be. So I turned to money instead. I told you I was degenerate. . . . And then, when on Sunday night you showed your hand—the hand you'd never played, the hand I'd been waiting for you to play for such a long, long time—I didn't know what to do. You see, things had gone rather far. . . . And then—Sir Hilton Shutter very kindly showed me the way."

A door closed. Forsyth had disobeyed.

"But, Dot, my darling, we'll be awfully poor."

"D'you think I care? I only worshipped riches because I hadn't got you. Luxury was the god I set up in your place. I tried to

drown my love in a butt of Malmsey. But, you see, it couldn't be done. Malmsey's sickening stuff. I'd much sooner drink beer. And now about this old trial. I'm to be in attendance, in case——"

"Oh, burn the trial," said Pembury, taking her in his arms. "I haven't kissed your blessed mouth since——"

"August the seventh, 1914," said Elizabeth. "I've got it down in a diary. 'He kissed my lips.'"

"My sweet, my sweet. . . ."

The girl just clung to him.

After a moment or two she lifted a radiant face.

"I think I shall have to marry you, whether you're convicted or not. You see, you're not only my Best Man—you're so much the very best man I ever saw."

\* \* \* \* \*

On Monday those sections of the Press which had been hoping to be able to announce *Sensational Developments* under the heading **WELL-KNOWN VISCOUNT CHARGED** were more than satisfied.

Before the case was called on, the Magistrate left the Bench, and Quaritch and his opponent were summoned behind the scenes. This was unusual. By the time the three reappeared excitement was running high.

The Magistrate's clerk nodded, and the case was called on.

Pembury stepped into the dock, and the Magistrate cleared his throat.

"Mr. Shorthorn," he said. The Solicitor to the Police rose to his feet and bowed. "I have decided, before proceeding with this case, to tell you that I have formed a very definite opinion.

"The position in which I stand is one of peculiar difficulty. If the charge was less grave, if the social position of the defendant was less considerable, if all the circumstances did not combine, rightly or wrongly, to attract to this case a good deal of attention, my path would be plain and easy to follow. As it is, I have thought proper to consult the Chief Magistrate and I may say that he agrees with me that the course which I am about to take is the only one which is at once convenient and just.

"By the merest accident, I am in possession of information which has a direct and powerful bearing upon this charge. That information would become evidence if I could be put into the box."

He paused.

Except for the noise of breathing and the flick of a reporter's page, the Court, which



was crammed with people, was still as death.

In a retired waiting-room Lady Elizabeth sat fretfully straining her ears, continually crossing and recrossing two sweet pretty legs and striving desperately to possess a mutinous spirit.

The Magistrate proceeded.

"In view of what I have said, Mr. Shorthorn, would you prefer that another Magistrate should deal with this case?"

"I am more than content, sir, that you should deal with it."

Mr. Shorthorn resumed his seat.

"And you, Mr. Quaritch?"

Treasury Counsel smiled whimsically.

"The best, sir," he said, "is good enough for me."

An attempt at applause, which succeeded the roar of laughter, was instantly suppressed.

"Very well, then. On the evening of the defendant's arrest I was dining out. Though he is probably unaware of the fact, I patronised the same restaurant as he did and, what is more, I sat at the next table." Everyone's gaze shifted to the accused. The latter stood like a rock. "And I observed—if I may say so, with surprise—that he drank nothing but water."

A nervous ripple of laughter ran through the Court.

"I see that my words were equivocal. I should say that my surprise was provoked not by his personal failure to drink wine—for I do not know his habits and I never set eyes on him before—but by the spectacle of anyone of his age who to-day considers water fit for internal use."

The Court laughed tremulously.

"The results of my observation do not end there. We are told that the collision occurred at ten-twenty-five. As luck will have it, I saw the defendant leave. I did not notice the time, for there was, of course, no reason at all why I should: but, recalling my own movements, I am satisfied that he finally left that restaurant not earlier than ten-fifteen. He was then unquestionably sober."

"The opinion I have formed is that in no circumstances is it possible for a man who is sober at ten-fifteen, who for the last two hours has touched no alcohol, to be drunk at ten-twenty-five."

That upon the evening in question the learned Magistrate's watch was ten minutes fast was not his fault. The man was scrupulous.

The case for the prosecution died there and then.

The prosecution was withdrawn, apologies were offered, the defendant left the dock, applause was suppressed.

Mr. Quaritch knew his job.

He rose to his feet.

"If, sir, I may complete the solution of this matter by disclosing what happened in the ten minutes of time during which my client was under observation neither by the judiciary nor the executive, I must confess that he seized the opportunity to consume a small glass of beer."

The Court roared its merriment.

"Possibly, the discovery of a small bottle of Bass—grim relic of some picnic—was responsible for his lapse from grace. Upon that point I have no instructions. It follows that at the time of the collision he indubitably smelt of liquor, and, while personally I should become uneasy if to smell of liquor were to be regarded as the peculiar privilege of drunkards, it was presumably his indignant recognition of that mocking perfume which provoked the constable, whose name, I observe, is Worthington, to . . ."

The rest of the sentence was lost in an explosion of delight—which the defendant missed.

In a retired waiting-room, cheek against cheek, Pembury and Lady Elizabeth let the world slip. . . .

And, as I have said, certain sections of the Press were perfectly satisfied. Could they have perused one document, reposing in Counsel's Brief, I imagine their satisfaction would have melted like snow upon the hearth. The very first words would have fused it—*THE LADY ELIZABETH CRECY will say*. . . . As it was, they were perfectly satisfied. And, when they were able to announce the lady's engagement to the hero of a recent *cause célèbre*, they could have thrown up their hats.

It was generally admitted that Lady Elizabeth was to marry by far the best man. Harry Fairie, of Castle Charing, put it much more strongly.

*Another complete story by Dornford Yates will appear in the next number.*



*Photo by]*

*[Sport. & General.*

FINISH OF AN EXPLOSION SHOT SIMILAR TO THE ONE WHICH I PLAYED AT A CRITICAL STAGE IN THE FIGHT FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

# GOLFING DIFFICULTIES

## TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF AN OPEN GOLF CHAMPION

By A. G. HAVERS

*Open Golf Champion*

It is not the long handicap golfer who has all the troubles of the game. The author of the following article, who must for the present, at any rate, be regarded as the premier player of the world, gives hitherto unpublished descriptions of his difficulties, experienced while struggling to obtain the greatest of golfing honours. Amidst his sensational successes at the age of twenty-five, he is generous to his opponents, and attributes his triumphs at Troon and Gleneagles to his accurate placing of tee shots in the gales of wind which harassed the competitors. His "winning stroke" in the Open Championship is described in detail—a shot which he looks upon as having been the agency through which the greatest of golfing honours was prevented from going to America, for whose leading representative, Walter Hagen, he expresses much admiration.

**D**IFFICULTIES overcome in golf bring their compensations just as in ordinary life. Even now I attribute in no small measure my success in the Open Championship to the fact that during the qualifying rounds there occurred many things which were handicaps only to be pushed aside by the exercise of restraint. On the Troon Municipal Course, where the first qualifying round took place, a very

strong wind was blowing; but it was not in the long game that I found my chief difficulty. It was in the task of settling down to the delicacy of putting that caused me most trouble. The wind was strong enough to affect the gentle swing of the putter and almost make one try to grip the turf with one's toe-nails in order not to be swayed by the breeze. More or less I experienced this trouble all the way through.

Putting under such circumstances was the sole reason for my taking three strokes on so many greens, and for failing to "break" 80. Although it is possible to advise most people what to do when golfing conditions are trying, I find it hard to think of any universal cure for inaccurate putting in a gale; for, unlike a Bisley marksman, it is not possible to delay the effort until such time as the wind shall moderate.

For the purpose of a municipal course, that at Troon is excellent; but I found myself struggling to judge distances, owing to the absence of near-green bunkers to relieve the flatness of the ground—bunkers which are guide-posts and helpful, providing you do not get into them.

More obstacles and embarrassments than were intended by the architect of the course were met with in the second qualifying round on the Troon New. With the wind very high, it was a question of not meeting with any unusually bad luck while playing at holes which were overbunkered, as, in my opinion, some of those on the New Course are.

Putting difficulties again assailed me, for at the ninth hole I missed a two-footer, which would have been disconcerting but for the fact that I was out in a satisfactory 35. Still, the "psychology of golf" came in just after that, for I took three putts on each of the next two greens. Still the elements continued to take an unwelcome part in augmenting the obstacles arranged for the ordinary purposes of the game.

"Low visibility," as naval gentlemen say, was caused by rain, and the ball assumed a tendency to skid on the face of the clubs. When one considers what a fine test of golf this course is in every way, and the conditions under which play took place, one can well understand how those who had not done well going out found it either difficult or impossible to qualify. A poor outward half, in fact, was almost sure to be fatal to a low score, because the longer homeward half made it so hard to pick up strokes under

such conditions, or even to keep the score down.

It was a great relief to finish in 77, for that meant qualifying; but I shall always look back upon those 36 holes as one of my most troublesome experiences.

What the boys call "Tattenham Corner" was something of a bugbear to me during the play in the championship proper on the Old Course. The "Corner" consists of the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th holes. Nearly always did I drop a stroke at each of the first three holes mentioned.

Not through faultiness of long shots did this occur, for once again it was because of missing short putts, excepting on the green they call the "Postage Stamp." This will explain to those who have been curious on the point how it was that my outward scores of 38, 37, 38, 39 compared unfavourably with many others who took 34 to 36.

Although the wind assisted the long game



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ADDRESSING THE BALL FOR THE DRIVE.



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[Sport &amp; General.

THE TOP OF MY SWING FOR THE DRIVE.

going out, it was difficult to make the ball stop on the greens, and my best golf and scores were coming home against the gale—35, 36, 35, and 37.

Against this trying wind I always hit the ball down with both wooden and iron clubs. In this way I managed to get all the distance required, and was also the better enabled to avoid overrunning the greens.

Thus, through many difficulties, to the last hole but one in the final round.

This hole had caused me much trouble during the three previous rounds. I had been using my No. 1 iron for my seconds and running over the left of the green. Even after my first error in this way, I still thought that the club was right; but with the mistake repeated, I determined to try

something else for the 71st hole of the competition.

My winning shot was the result of cogitation I devoted to trying to save a stroke at this hole. I took a brassie, which, of course, had to be spared. There was a powerful wind blowing from the right, and so I cut the ball into the breeze. The ball "held up" finely, and thus for the first time did I finish on the green—three yards from the pin.

When one achieves something at golf, one always looks back upon some particular stroke as having saved the situation or as having been instrumental in gaining victory. Had I not improved upon my previous three attempts at this hole, I should at least have been compelled to play off with that splendid battler Walter Hagen.

I knew that my chance of winning was a bright one then, but further trouble awaited me. In trying to leave an easy second shot to the 72nd hole I deliberately placed my tee shot to the left of the fairway.

This was very nearly my undoing, for I overdid the placing business, with the result that the finish was in the rough—not badly, I was glad to see. However, there was a tuft of grass, very strong in texture, near to my ball, and as this would hold the heel of my club and turn the toe forward when the stroke was taken, I viewed the position with much care. That

which I expected happened, and as the face of the club "closed" on the ball, the result was a slightly hooked shot.

That would not have mattered so much, but my ball ran on into a bunker to the left of the green. I have to admit to feeling a trifle disappointed, but, without wasting time in repining, I played an explosion shot to within a few yards of the hole and so accomplished a "5."

After my own sorrows at "Tattenham Corner," perhaps it was only human for me to feel in some measure relieved when I was told that Walter Hagen (in the best position to threaten my leadership) had not steered too clear a course round the hazardous bend. Still, I knew Walter too well to look upon the fight as won. I could only arrive at the conclusion that this fine



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THE TOP OF MY SWING FOR A MASHIE SHOT.

fighting golfer would have some difficulty in tying.

Just like the real Hagen, he made a splendid tee shot from the final 18th, and even the knowledge that he needed a "3" to tie did not appear to upset him in the least, in spite of the fact that he had to play to a most difficult green, surrounded by bunkers. I watched his second shot, which seemed good enough until, towards the finish of its flight, the ball commenced to swerve to the right. The pitch was on the green, but I think there must have been some slight "cut" on the ball which ended its journey in a small bunker at the side of the green.

You all know the rest—how, yielding nothing, Hagen played out and holed a putt of between three and four yards, just one

stroke behind. My delight at having won does not prevent me from admiring Hagen's great struggle in his gallant defeat by the same margin as the one by which he had won a year previously.

From the long, long strain of the seventy-two holes stroke competition, it was almost a relief to turn to Gleneagles. On this, one of the finest inland golf courses in the world, with its bunkers fearsomely bold and all its hazards on a grand scale, I had some



Photo by]

[Sport &amp; General.

FINISH OF MASHIE SHOT.

splendidly hard tussles before "confirming the form," as the racing writers say, of the performance at Troon.

One of my hardest games was with Arthur Butchart, my old friend who is the present Scottish champion. Another nice match was that with Angel de la Torre, who, before the start of the round, was good enough to wish me luck, but, fortunately for me, his second wish (that he would hole out all his brassie shots) was not realised.

One of the most extraordinary shots I have ever seen was played by Frank Ball at the first hole of the second eighteen in the Gleneagles Final. Ball pushed his tee shot into a bunker on the right—a very excusable error in a gale of wind. For me, I was down the middle, and in the possession of a two-holes lead.

The bunkered ball, instead of lying in the sand, rested on grass half-way up the face of the bunker. With splendid spirit, Frank, seeing that something big had got to be done, actually took his brassie. His shot must have been one of the best he has ever accomplished, for the ball finished within three yards of the hole.

My second was seven to eight yards away. Careful study of my line of putt resulted in my holing out. I was almost sorry for Frank, after so bold a recovery, for I felt that he would be pretty sure to miss his putt, which he did. That placed him three down, and I do not think he recovered from his disappointment.

Both at Troon and Gleneagles I owed a great deal to my controlled drives. Wind at both places made tee shots a matter of much concern, especially on the more closely bunkered courses. Many of my opponents failed to keep on the line always, and paid penalties that were sometimes very severe.

I had not seen the Old Course at Troon since 1914, and must congratulate James Braid on the arrangement of the new bunkers there. They are excellently placed and make a big improvement, although



Photo by]

[Sport & General.

MY GRIP.

some of the competitors could have done without them.

My impression of Gleneagles leaves me rather surprised that this course has never been the scene of a championship competition. It is a truly magnificent test of golf, and any "Open" played there would be sure to result in many exciting incidents, for there are just a nice number of places where golfers would be tempted to take chances when slips had left them something to make up.







# THE CHRISTMAS STAR

By WALLACE B. NICHOLS

**T**HERE once a star through waste and wild  
Led three wise kings to find God's Child;  
Soft in a manger's fragrant hay  
The new-born Over-Prophet lay.  
In Rome that night an emperor slept  
But to his dreams no marvel crept;  
And o'er the glimmering Esquiline  
No star unwonted paused to shine;  
Nor rumours came to any slave  
Of a Deliverer strong to save.  
Far off, upon the Parthian sand,  
The legions, making a last stand,  
Through windings of the rallying horn  
Heard not the Prince of Peace was born;  
While in strange Britain, in a grove  
Of wind-loud oaks, dark Druids wove  
Their spells about a mystic stem,  
Chanting, nor knew of Bethlehem.  
When now on Christmas Eve we see  
The Christmas Star what more are we  
Than they, within the mortal fold,  
Unless we bring, for myrrh and gold  
And frankincense, as those wise kings,  
Our own most treasurable things,  
And leave our matters, near and far,  
To follow that all-guiding star?



"Oh, I didn't know it was you, Mrs. Hanney!" . . . The piece of amber for a moment trembles."

# RED AMBER

By HUGH WALPOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT BAILEY

ONCE upon a time there lived in the city of Polchester two old ladies—one was called Mrs. Sarah Hanney, and the other Miss Margaret Buck.

They were alive and active in the good old days, before Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, before Archdeacon Brandon's death, and the Sea Town scandals, and the Boer War, and the telephone and the reign of the silver screen. In those good days Polchester was as completely shut off, for many of its inhabitants, from the rest of the world as though it were a palm-tufted island in the middle of the African seas. Many of those inhabitants had never seen a train in their lives—Mrs. Sarah Hanney was one of these.

In spite of her being a widow—which implied, of course, an earlier experience of marriage—she was one of the least sophisticated of human beings. She had been nowhere save down Orange Street

into the market-place of High Street and into the cathedral, and she may be said to have known no one save the late Mr. James Hanney, and not to have known him very well.

It was, perhaps, on account of his character that she had always lived so circumscribed a life. He had been a linen-draper, and his little shop had been at the corner of the market just before St. James's, where the hill runs down to Sea Town. Not a very good location, but he could never afford to move to a better.

He was a conceited and self-opinionated man, spare, with large spectacles, carrotty side-whiskers, and a bald, shiny head. Things had never gone well with him. He was self-opinionated at the wrong times, obstinate when he should have been yielding, yielding when he should have been obstinate. He was a man with bitter grievances.

Mrs. Hanney's life had been no very happy

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one, but when he died, leaving her nothing but debts, in spite of his loss her condition could not have been said to have improved.

She had a relation who had made money by selling hats in Drymouth, and he very reluctantly gave her a small allowance. He wrote to her at times telling her how reluctant he was.

Mrs. Hanney was a small woman like a ripe strawberry. She was fond of dressing well, but had, of course, no opportunities. She was good-hearted, very quiet in her manner, and minded her own affairs. Those same affairs consisted in managing on the hat-maker's allowance, and this was no easy thing. She took a bed-sitting-room in a side-street off Orange Street, a side-street closed in as resolutely as though the other streets were elderly relations protecting its virtue. You might have been in the very heart of a great city, for all that you saw, in Robin Street, of skies and fields and nibbling sheep. And this was a pity because Mrs. Hanney loved the open country.

## II.

THE only other lodger in the little house in Robin Street was Miss Margaret Buck. These two ladies were "cared for" by Mrs. Pascoe, a very good woman, who loved the sound of the harmonium and was married to a railway-porter. She was so busy a person that the harmonium only truly had its fling of a Sunday.

Mrs. Hanney loved the harmonium, and Miss Buck did not.

Miss Buck was a thin, fair, tall, queer-looking woman. She resembled, although the comparison is unkind, a stick of rhubarb. Perhaps that is not unkind. There is something fresh and virginal about a stick of rhubarb. There was something fresh and virginal about Miss Buck. She was a very delicate woman, always suffering from colds in the head. Her eyes were for ever a-stream. She had also a weak heart. Her digestion was miserable. On the other hand, she was fond of good music, which was why she disliked the harmonium. Her voice was fresh and virginal, like everything else about her. She sang the dear old songs, like "Annie Laurie," "Robin Adair," and "Drink to me only."

She was very ladylike—she had connections in India. She was cultivated. She liked the books of Mrs. Lynn Linton, Mrs. Oliphant, and William Black. She

confessed that she enjoyed a novel "once and again." She was very poor, depending entirely on a married brother for support. She sought economy in many ways, chiefly, I fear, by starving herself. She heated cocoa over a gas-ring in her room, and was especially fond of gingerbreads and preserved ginger.

It was natural enough that these two ladies, Mrs. Hanney and Miss Margaret Buck, being the only two lodgers in Mrs. Pascoe's house, should become well acquainted. They were not naturally suited to one another. True friendship depends so much upon what you have in your eye. For one it is a golden pin, for another a canary singing in a cage, for another a well-browned cutlet, for another the Book of Common Prayer. Miss Buck had culture and refinement, Mrs. Hanney only the desire to make two difficult ends meet. Culture and finance are worlds apart.

Nevertheless, although for a long time Miss Buck was not aware of it, Mrs. Hanney *had* something else in her eye, and that something else was colour: colour of anything—colour of sunsets, colour of clothes, colour of shop windows, colour of harmonium, colour of two tomatoes on a plate, colour of beads, colour of a ribbon or two. In her own self Mrs. Hanney could not indulge this passion. Black is so much your cheapest wear. Will not one black bonnet last for ever? At any rate, it must. But Mrs. Hanney sometimes had flowers in her room—primroses and snowdrops in the spring season, a carnation or so and, once or twice a year, a rose.

She thought Miss Buck very beautiful because she liked to wear pale green. Miss Buck had two water-colours hanging on her wall that Mrs. Hanney adored, and she had her piece of red amber.

This piece of red amber was thick and solid, like a little box, and stood on Miss Buck's mantelpiece with a strength and independence that Mrs. Hanney could not sufficiently admire. And beautiful lights shot through it. It was four-cornered and square, but it had, stuck on to the top of it, a dragon cut out of lighter amber, thin gold colour like fragile glass, and there was something in the contrast between the thick deep blood colour of the block and the thin pale gold of the dragon that was to Mrs. Hanney supremely fascinating.

Sitting in the armchair in Miss Buck's room, Mrs. Hanney's eyes would grope up through their large spectacles until they

found the red-gold on the mantelpiece, and then there they would stay.

"Yes," said Miss Buck between her genteel sneezes, "my brother brought me that from China. Very pretty, I think, and valuable too, I'm told. Real amber—a fine piece."

"I should like to visit China," said Mrs. Hanney.

"Well," said Miss Buck, her thin body swaying with her sneeze like a poplar in a driving wind, "I'm sure China is a nice place. Our missionaries are doing fine work there. I'm always expecting that Lucy to knock that bit of amber off the mantelpiece. I'll give her something if she breaks it!"

"Breaks it!" cried Mrs. Hanney. "Oh, no! Oh, no! That would be terrible. Why, Miss Buck, it is one of my chief pleasures coming in and looking at it. I think of it of a morning before I get up. It's very kind of you to let me."

"Yes, it's a pretty piece," said Miss Buck.

The thought of that beautiful thing lying smashed into a hundred pieces by the red, careless hands of Lucy, the maid-of-all-work, was too terrible to Mrs. Hanney. She had not very much to think about. This thought began now to dominate the others. The colour patterns that she saw—the sloping red roof beyond her window, the pink sheen upon her bedroom wallpaper if you laid your head a little to one side, the blue in two vases on her mantelpiece, a little dark red box on her table in which she kept buttons and thread—all these began to surrender to the deep blood-colour of the amber. The thing seemed to her alive—to know her and to recognise her when she came into the room.

### III.

ONE day, when Miss Buck was out, she picked it up and rested it in her hands. Until that morning she had never ventured to touch it. It was a cold, blustery, smoke-blowing March day. Primroses under the hedges, perhaps? Yes, and a glint on the wood-slipping streams, their waters ruffled like the ruffled grey feathers of a bird. These were not Mrs. Hanney's thoughts. Dear me, no! She thought that it had been bacon and tomatoes once again for breakfast, and that she must positively speak to Mrs. Pascoe about it, and about also how the wind whirled behind the wallpaper in her bedroom, like a man spying upon her as she dressed of a morning, and laughing at her. While these thoughts were occupying

her, almost unconsciously she took down the piece of amber from the shelf, and as soon as her fingers felt its cool, sliding surface, she started. She had done something wicked, something she should not, something most certainly that would offend Miss Buck, should she know.

She looked out through Miss Buck's windows on to all the grey clouds hurrying along, as though some angelic housemaid were hurling out of celestial windows acres of unnecessary bedding. The bending chimneys tried to catch the bolsters and blankets as they passed. The sky was dirty and discontented. Mrs. Hanney's old, gnarled fingers passed lovingly again and again over the smooth surface.

She may be said to be in a trance. Someone has somewhere said that Romance is a state of hallucination—one of those easy statements that mean nothing at all. Well, Mrs. Hanney is now in a state of hallucination. She does not see the grey marble slab of Miss Buck's wallpaper, nor the gaping coal-scuttle, nor the rain now spinning spider webs on the window-pane. No, she feels the wind in her face, the ground is carpeted with golden primroses, the sun is setting in a blaze of amber splendour, she is twenty years of age and lovely.

"Oh, I didn't know it was you, Mrs. Hanney!"

This was Mrs. Pascoe. The piece of amber for a moment trembles—it had almost slipped—then it is back again on the mantelpiece.

Mrs. Hanney had been caught in a crime. But what crime? A crime to feel twenty? Well, perhaps. A crime, at any rate, that Mrs. Pascoe will never commit.

"Didn't know you was in here, Mrs. Hanney."

"Hardly knew I was myself, Mrs. Pascoe. Miss Buck is so friendly, in a way of speaking."

"And why shouldn't she be? There's a friendly atmosphere in this house, as I have often myself noticed. That's a handsome bit of joolery Miss Buck has there."

"Yes. Her brother brought it her from the East."

"I'm always telling Lucy that she's got to be extra careful with they foreign articles. 'Twice as brittle,' I say to her, 'as your home-made goods.' Break as soon as look at yer."

"Oh, it would be terrible"—Mrs. Hanney's hands clung together—"should anything happen to it! 'Tis the prettiest bit of colour

I've seen in many a day. I like just to look at it. If it was broke, I don't know what-ever I'd do."

"Why, Mrs. Hanney," said Mrs. Pascoe, looking at her curiously, "what a colour you're turning!"

"Oh, if anything were to happen like——" Mrs. Hanney looked at Mrs. Pascoe with wide, detached eyes.

And the next thing that happened was that Miss Buck was suddenly ill and had to take to her bed.

#### IV.

MISS BUCK was not a good patient. From the very first she was certain that she was about to die. Something on her lung. Her cough was a disaster, her eyes piteous. She suffered. She was afraid of death. As she told Mrs. Hanney, dying wasn't for her as it was for others. There was no one on the other side to whose company she was greatly looking forward. Her mother and father were nothing much—as company, you understand. There had been someone—once—but he was not dead. Far from it. Married. With two children. "Might have been mine," said Miss Buck, "had things gone . . ."

She had the piece of amber brought in and put on the table near her where she could look at it. Mrs. Hanney looked at it, too. Soon Miss Buck was too ill to care. It looked all blurred to her, she said. To Mrs. Hanney it grew clearer and clearer, burnt with a more living, more brilliant flame every minute of every hour.

"I know I'm going to die, dear," said Miss Buck for the thousandth time. "I feel it. One can always tell."

Slowly in Mrs. Hanney's heart there began to grow an animosity towards Miss Buck. This was strange, because Mrs. Hanney had never in her life before felt an animosity towards anyone. And Miss Buck had been very kind to her always. She admired, too, the pale green colours and the rhubarb figure. Nevertheless, dislike boiled up as she sat there staring at the bed, with its thin, unsatisfactory shape beneath the sheets, its watery eyes, its pale, querulous nose.

"Why don't she," thought Mrs. Hanney to herself, "up and fight this thing? She's simply lying down under it."

And suddenly she said so, in a voice so new and startling, so harsh and severe, that Miss Buck herself was amazed.

"If I was you, Miss Buck, I'd resist this illness of yours, instead of just lying down

and letting it throttle you. You're not standing up to it—indeed you're not."

Miss Buck was so deeply startled that it brought on a fit of coughing. Then, as she lay there, drawing strangled breaths, little Mrs. Hanney wondered at herself that she could have been so cruel.

"I believe you want me to die," said Miss Buck at last. "I haven't a friend." Then she added surprisingly: "My own fault, no doubt. There's something in what you say. But the trouble with me, Mrs. Hanney, is that I don't rightly care whether I live or die. It don't make as much difference to me as it should. What am I, anyway, living or dead? Only an encumbrance."

Mrs. Hanney wanted to say no, that she wasn't an encumbrance to anybody, but the words stuck in her throat.

"It's about time for the doctor," she said, looking at the piece of amber. Miss Buck's eyes followed hers.

"You can have that piece if I go, Mrs. Hanney," she said. "I know you like it. I've seen you looking at it."

#### V.

AFTER that Miss Buck got worse. She became very ill indeed. One night, when the green-shaded lamp beside her bed was burning low, and the strangest shapes were about the house—high elm-fingered figures dark above the roofs, white round patches of moonlight across the road like silver pieces, horses spectral against the lighter grey of the night-sky, witches riding broomstick in flitting cloud—Miss Buck leaned towards Mrs. Hanney and, holding the old lady's arm with a skinny finger, whispered—

"You can take that piece now, if you want it. I'm not going to live through to morning."

Mrs. Hanney took it. I'm not defending her. There is not much defence to be found for her. She did wait until Miss Buck had crawled over on to her side and hid her white face in her long, bony arms. Then she took it. She took it to her room. For months she had been trying to see what it would look like in her own room among her own things. She put it on her chest of drawers. Oh, the pretty! Oh, the pretty! There it was, lit by two candles, with the red study-box near to it, shining and gleaming and glittering, and the gold dragon on top, like honey, like primrose, like sun of the early morning across a field of wheat. But it was the place where it was blood-red that Mrs. Hanney liked the best. There, in the heart

of the thick, sturdy independence of it, there was this pool of liquid, quivering red. Alive, it seemed. Oh, surely alive, as it looked down upon that old crinkled, strawberry face, the pasty, snub nose, the watery eyes, the clasped and pleading hands! Oh,

sleep all night, but lit a candle and lay there, watching.

She forgot about Miss Buck, and in the morning was quite startled to find that she was yet alive. She had certainly supposed that Miss Buck would die. She regarded



"You can take that piece now, if you want it. I'm not going to live through to morning."

surely alive as it proceeded to devour the heart and soul of that old lady, to draw them into its own pool of liquid red-gold, to absorb them twice, and then to stare about for more that it might devour!

Oh, the pretty! Mrs. Hanney could not

the piece of amber with a new alarm in her eye. She stood there in her woollen dressing-gown, her grey hair tousled, her eyes questioning. She took it down from the chest of drawers and fondled it with her rough fingers. It was not quite so much

hers as it had been the night before—then it had seemed absolutely hers. It had been as though Miss Buck were altogether dead. Now—well, Miss Buck was certain to die before the twenty-four hours were out.

Then Miss Buck began to get better. Her illness “took a turn.” As Mrs. Pascoe so frequently remarked: “Whoever would of thought it, she with no more resistance in her than a chicken-bone!” The weather took a turn, too, at the same time, lovely warm, soft Spring days, the woods above the town shining with rivers and lakes of bluebells, and the cuckoo heard across the dimpling waters of the Pol.

The weather seemed to help Miss Buck. The warm sun poured into her room, and Mrs. Hanney, sitting there, could often discard her shawl.

Mrs. Hanney, looking upon her, hated her. What did she want to get well for? Who wanted her to get well? Why, she didn’t even wish it herself! And think of all this trouble she had given—trouble to Mrs. Pascoe, trouble to Mrs. Hanney, trouble to Lucy, trouble to the doctor, and all for nothing! Why, even the Precentor had come in to see her one day, the Precentor of the cathedral itself, poor Mr. Ryle, who was always so anxious to be in well with everybody. And he said that Archdeacon Brandon himself had been asking about her, him with all the troubles of the diocese on his mind, to think of Miss Buck! And, after all, she hadn’t died!

Mrs. Hanney sat there hour after hour in the stiff green chair, her shoulders hunched, staring resentfully. Miss Buck was conscious of her stare.

“I wish you wouldn’t look at me so,” Miss Buck weakly remarked.

“And that’s all one gets——” began Mrs. Hanney.

Upon which Miss Buck shed tears—she was in that weak convalescent state. There was now terror in Mrs. Hanney’s heart. The moment would surely arrive when Miss Buck would ask for the amber back again, and then what would Mrs. Hanney do? She could not live without it—no, she could not.

In your eye now that is all that is there. Only the amber. Once you saw Heaven and its glories, and again the food and the clothes of Mr. Hanney, and again primroses and the running brooks, and again a chop tenderly cooked, and a strange uncertain pain just above the left knee, but now only the quivering red and gold of that square of

ruby—without it there is no life. Better dead. It is a question of Miss Buck dying or Mrs. Hanney.

## VI.

THE trouble with Miss Buck now was, as she became stronger, her heart. Her illness had strained her heart very severely. She must be extremely careful. Miss Buck felt the interest of this. She lay in a long chair, that kind Mrs. Combermen had lent to her, in front of her window, and watched the Spring sweep the country. The Precentor came again to see her, and actually Mrs. Sampson, the Dean’s wife, brought her some magazines.

This was all, thought Mrs. Hanney savagely, because Miss Buck had once done some cathedral work. Ugh! Anyone could do church work had she a mind!

Mrs. Hanney slept now with the piece of amber in her hand. She could not go to sleep did she not have it. She knew every part of it now by heart. Small though it was, it had a varied personality. Here it was smooth, and then suddenly it slipped beneath the fingers into a groove, then it rose again until your hand touched a thin ridge over which it slipped into a little hollow of coolness. Mrs. Hanney held it against her cheek and so slept.

The blow fell.

“Why, Mrs. Hanney,” Miss Buck murmured (she spoke delicately now because she was an invalid, because her heart was bad, and because the Dean’s wife had been to see her), “where’s my piece—my piece of amber?”

“When you were very ill——” began Mrs. Hanney.

“Oh, yes, I remember. Said you could have it when I was gone. But I’m not gone yet. You’re keeping it safe for me, I expect.”

“Yes, I am.”

“Well, that’s good of you. I wonder whether you would mind bringing it to me. I shouldn’t wonder whether a bit of colour wouldn’t do me good.”

Mrs. Hanney went and brought it. That night she didn’t sleep, nor the night after, nor the night after that.

She was possessed. Why should she not admit it? She had longed once for a child in those days far back when she had been young with Mr. Hanney. A cousin of hers had allowed her little girl—chubby with red hair—to stay with the Hanneys for a day or two. In the same way then Mrs. Hanney had been possessed. After the

little girl had gone, she had lain awake crying, and Mr. Hanney had said— Never mind. That was all over. She was a lonely old woman, and must have her piece of fire to warm her breast—must have it—*must*.

Miss Buck became now afraid of Mrs. Hanney—she was always creeping around and staring. Miss Buck felt that Mrs. Hanney did not like her—knew, indeed, that she did not. But then, if she did not like her, why was she always around? Tell me that, Mrs. Pascoe? And Mrs. Pascoe said that she was silly. There was nothing wrong about Mrs. Hanney.

"Nothing wrong," said Miss Buck, staring at her wallpaper. "I just feel she don't like me."

"A sick woman's fancies," Mrs. Pascoe called them.

And, indeed, Miss Buck did not get well as quickly as she should—didn't make the right sort of progress. And that was such a wonderful Spring. The orchards were blushing with flowers, the birds sang for mad, and the sunsets from Miss Buck's window were a riot. It was Miss Buck's heart that was so queer, jumping like a live thing inside her and giving her so queer a pain, and whenever Mrs. Hanney came near her, the pain was twice as bad. You know what a sick woman's fancies can be? Well, then, that was the way Miss Buck soon came to feel about Mrs. Hanney. She saw her in the dark in bed, saw her twice her natural size and making faces at her. Funny old woman like a strawberry, with her bent shoulders, her groping fingers and her slip-slop slippers. Miss Buck hated to see her in the dark.

And the strange thing was that she never connected her creeping around with the red amber. Miss Buck had almost forgotten it. I dare say if Mrs. Hanney had asked for it, Miss Buck would have given it to her. She had never put the value on it that Mrs. Hanney did. It all depends on what you have in your eye. Miss Buck had Miss Buck in hers. But, of course, Mrs. Hanney did not know this. She was sure that Miss Buck would never let the piece out of

her eye while she lived, and now, dying, would probably give it to somebody else. The trouble was that now Miss Buck was never out of her room, and so where the amber was, there was she, too.

"I hate her!" said Mrs. Hanney. "The nasty mean thing—I hate her!"

Then suddenly one evening Mrs. Hanney had a horrible vision of herself. She saw what a bad, wicked woman she was coming. She fell on her knees behind her bed. "O God, help me! I've terrible thoughts and desires. I'm as good as a murderess! O God, come down and help me!"

But God didn't come down.

## VII.

MRS. HANNEY could live without it no longer. She would steal it.

She hoped Miss Buck was asleep. She pushed open the door. Miss Buck was sitting in front of her glass, brushing her hair by the light of a candle. Miss Buck in her night-dress was herself like a long tallow candle. She could not see the door through her mirror. Mrs. Hanney stole across the floor in her woollen dressing-gown. Miss Buck turned and saw her. With hair-brush raised, she screamed.

"Mrs. Hanney! Why, whatever——"

Mrs. Hanney advanced to her. "You let me have it now. I must have it! Do you hear? Give it me! Give it me!"

She caught Miss Buck's hair in her hand. The two women stared at one another. Miss Buck rose to her full height, turned grey under the candle-light, then crumpled like an empty pillow-case on the floor.

Miss Buck was dead. No doubt about it. Dead this time—dead of fright and a weak heart.

Mrs. Hanney saw that she was dead, picked up the red amber, clasped it to her thin breast, shuffled across the floor, went into her room, climbed a chair, placed the amber on the chest of drawers where it had been before, stood back, looked at it, climbed again and altered its position, sighed, then went to the head of the stairs and screamed down for help.



# THE CHRISTMAS PRINCESS

By EDGAR WALLACE

*Author of "Sanders of the River," "The Keepers of the King's Peace," "Sandi the King-Maker," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

THERE were times when John Bennett Watson, abbreviated for office purposes to "J. B.," wished he were not the managing director of the Western Commercial Corporation—moments when he envied the manager of the Broad Street branch of the Southern and Eastern Bank. This in spite of the fact that he was a normal man of thirty-something, without any business worries whatever, enjoying the best of health and an income which, at a moderate estimate, was twenty times larger than the hard-worked bank manager's.

J. B. was a man who in no circumstances interfered in other people's affairs; meddlers he loathed; outside folks who knew how things could be done better he abominated; and yet there were certain domestic arrangements of the Southern and Eastern Bank that he would alter.

Gray, the manager, a harassed little man with a straggling beard, came over to see him about a draft, and John made an awkward dive to the matter that at once intrigued and irritated him.

"You are very busy at the bank, Mr. Gray?"

"Yes," sighed Gray, rising and gathering up his documents, "too busy. With the annual audit coming on, the slump in industrials, the heavy cash balances I must carry to meet end of the quarter demands, I look like to have a happy New Year. Good morning!"

"I was working late in my office the other night," said John, hastily arresting the official's departure, "and, looking across the road, I saw a girl working at eleven o'clock. She was still working when I left, and the next morning I saw her at her desk when I arrived."

The manager scratched his beard. "Who can that be, now?" he asked absently. "Oh, yes, that is Miss Welford. She was secretary to our late accountant. Poor fellow! He died, leaving things in a terrible muddle, and if it wasn't for the fact that she has an instinct for banking, and has got his department work at her fingertips, I should be in a fearful muddle. She is the only member of my staff that I would leave on the premises alone, I assure you."

"I thought I'd met her somewhere," said John carelessly and most untruthfully.

"I dare say," said the bank manager. "She is the sort of girl who has moved in a very good set. Her father lost his money in the rubber slump. By the way, rubber is a market that looks like reviving, Mr. Watson."

"I dare say," said John, to whom the fluctuations of the rubber market meant less than nothing. "I think I remember her—Annie Welford, isn't it?"

The manager shook his head. "I don't know—'F. G.' her initials are." He frowned. "I never trouble about the names of people. Oh, yes, it's Frances, that's the name. I've often thought she's quite a good-looking girl."

"You've often thought that, have you?" said John scornfully.

The man was scarcely human, and yet he was loath to let him go, and searched around in his mind for some excuse for detaining him.

"Where do you go for Christmas, Mr. Gray?"

"Home," said the other, showing the first sign of animation. "The two days in the year I look forward to are Good Friday

and Christmas Day. Christmas is the one day I can't work and can be really a perfectly happy man. I sit in front of a fire, and my children read to me or tell me Christmas stories, and that's my idea of a perfectly happy day."

"Great Heavens!" said John, aghast. "You *are* human, after all. Though I confess that if anybody tried to tell me a Christmas story on Christmas Day, I should go and look for a hatchet. And your staff—do they work?"

"I'm sorry to say that headquarters won't allow that," said the manager regretfully. "It would add to my enjoyment considerably if I knew that somebody else was working."

John took an instant dislike to him, had thoughts of changing his bank.

"Do you mean to tell me you would let her—them, I mean—work on Christmas Day? Why, it would be disgraceful!" he said hotly.

When the bank manager had gone, John strode over the carpeted floor of his office and stood staring across at the trim figure visible—more visible than he had hoped—from the window.

"Quite a good-looking girl!"

He smiled at the impertinence of the man. She was beautiful—the complete satisfaction of all his uncatalogued requirements. If he could only hear her speak! He shrank from the possibility of disillusionment. What would she do on Christmas Day, he wondered? Hold revel in her suburban home, possibly in the company of her sweetheart. He made a little grimace at the thought. Yet it was perfectly ridiculous to suppose that such a girl would be without admirers, and that from their hosts she should not have given preference to one over all the rest.

If Gray had been just a little more human, it would have been possible to secure an introduction, though he shrank even from that prospect.

He was staring at her when the girl looked up, saw his dim figure behind the window-pane, and, as though conscious that she had been the object of his scrutiny, got up quickly from the table, switched on the light, and pulled down the blind. It was the first time she had ever noticed him, he reflected glumly, and it was not very promising that her acknowledgment of his admiration should be so emphatically resentful.

John Watson went back to his bachelor

flat in St. James's with a feeling that the day had not been well spent, and that something in this one-sided intimacy had gone out of his life. He could no longer picture himself speaking to her, could weave no more dreams in which she played a complacent and agreeable part. Drawing the blind seemed to shut out even the visions that a pipe and a fire and a sprawling terrier bring to the most unimaginative. He must needs fall back upon the princess.

Her Serene Highness had been a figure of speculation from the day when old Nurse Crawley, who attended his infant needs, and was locally credited with being possessed of the devil, predicted that he would inherit a great fortune and marry a princess—a faith from which she never wavered all the days of her life. Fortune had come unexpectedly and vastly, and had been doubled and trebled by his own peculiar genius. But the princess remained amongst the glowing and shadowy shapes of the fire, less tangible than the blue smoke that curled from his pipe.

And now the princess bored him. He wanted to meet "F. G. Welford." He wanted badly to meet her—first, to apologise for his rudeness, and then to ask her—well, just to ask her if life held any greater attraction than the balancing of a late accountant's books.

The blind was drawn the next morning when he looked out. It was drawn on the morning of Christmas Eve. He had brought his bag to the office, and lost two trains in the hope that she might relent. She was inexorable.

He always travelled to Katterdown by train because the cottage—it had been his father's before him—had no accommodation for a car, and somehow his big limousine did not attune with the atmosphere of that faded and fragrant place.

The taxicab that took him to the station was half-way up Broad Street when he saw her. She was walking toward the office—had evidently been out to tea—and his cab was near enough to the side-walk to give him the nearest view of her face he had yet had. He drew his breath at the sight of her, and for a second was seized with an insane desire to stop the cab, get out, and, on some desperate excuse or other, speak to her. But before he could commit that folly she was gone.

Gray was a slave-driver, he decided, a sweater, a man of no sensibility or feeling. Christmas Eve! And to allow a girl to



work! Perhaps the cunning devil had lied to him, and she was working on Christmas Day. He hated the unhappy Mr. Gray, hated his baldness, his beard and all that was of him. Such a man had no soul, no proper appreciation of values. He was a cold-blooded exploiter of all that was best and noblest in humanity.

By the time he had reached Bullham Junction, John Bennett Watson was better balanced in mind, could chuckle at his own extravagances without wondering at them, which was ominous.

There was no conveyance at the station, and he walked through the one street of Bullham to "The Red Lion."

"Excuse me, Mr. Watson."

He turned to see the rubicund countenance and the blue coat of a policeman.

"Happy Christmas, Mr. Watson! You going out to Katterdown?"

"Why, yes, sergeant, as soon as I can get a cab."

"Likely you'll see my dog Mowser round about the village. He's a rare fellow for Katterdown; there's a dog there he's always fighting. Will you send him home with a flea in his ear? Give him a whack, and he'll go. Getting into bad habits, that dog. Comes home in the middle of the night and scratches the door till I let him in."

J. B. smiled and promised.

Mowser, a bedraggled wire-haired terrier, he found literally on the doorstep of the cottage, and Mowser's feud had evidently found expression in violence, for he was slightly tattered. John took him in and fed him. The hour was late, and he decided to send him back in the morning—an arrangement wholly agreeable to Mowser, who finished his scraps and went to sleep under the kitchen table.

So small was Katterdown Cottage that the man and his wife who acted as caretakers had no accommodation and slept at the village—a risky proceeding, as an insurance company had told him, but one which he preferred, for there were memories about this little house, with its thatched roof and Elizabethan chimneys, which were very pleasant, and the presence of strangers was insufferable. Here for ten years John Watson had wakened to hail the Christmas morn and listen to the silvery bells of the parish church, and had spent the morning in the sheltered garden, tending those hardy plants that reveal their treasures in bleak December. For ten Christmas Eves he had sat, huddled up

in the big, chintz-covered chair, with a pipe and a book and his pleasant thoughts, listening to the drip of rain or the thin whine of the wind, or, on one never-to-be-forgotten Christmas Eve, watching the snowflakes building white cobwebs in the corner of every pane. It was half-past eleven, and he had risen with a yawn to stretch himself, preparatory to going upstairs to bed, when there came to him from outside a sound which was familiar. He passed down the little passage, unbolted the front door, and stepped into the garden.

Out of the darkness came the peculiar and distinctive sound of an aeroplane's engines that were not running sweetly, and presently, peering overhead, he saw the shadow of great wings. Suddenly a blinding white light showed in the skies, illuminating fields and road, so brilliant that Katterdown Parish Church, a mile away, was visible. The light swooped in a circle, coming lower and lower, and finally vanished behind the privet fence of the Hermitage field, its radiance throwing the trim boundary hedge into silhouette.

Going back into the cottage for his coat, Watson ran through the garden, across the road, and, vaulting the gate, stumbled over the frozen plough-land to the place where the landing lights of the big machine were flickering to extinction.

"Hello!" called a voice, and John answered the hail, and presently came up with the two men who were standing by the under-carriage. One was lighting a cigarette, and the newcomer caught a momentary glimpse of his face, long, white, and blackly bearded. The other he could not see, but it was he who spoke.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"Katterdown, six miles from Petworth," Watson answered. "You got down without accident?"

There was no reply for a few seconds, and then the bearded man laughed softly. "We got down, but not without accident," he said, a dry note in his voice. "Is there a house where—"

Here he stopped and said something to his companion in an undertone. The short man grunted an inquiry in the same tone, and—

"I'll ask," he said. "Are we near to a village?"

"No, not nearer than a mile," said Watson. "I have a cottage, but it is rather isolated."

"Wife and family?"

John laughed quietly. "No," he said, "I am all alone."

Again the whispered colloquy.

"It may sound a little—unusual and impertinent, these questions," said the tall man at last, "but we have a passenger who, for State reasons, is travelling incognito. I must take you this much into my confidence and tell you that she ought not to be within a thousand miles of England. May I therefore rely upon your discretion?"

Dumbfounded, John Watson listened, his sense of adventure piqued. "Certainly you may rely upon me," he said. "I am a bachelor and live alone—I usually come to Katterdown to spend Christmas—and I haven't even a servant in the house. I was born here and have a certain sentimental feeling towards the place. I am giving you confidence for confidence—my name is Watson, by the way."

"Thank you," said the other simply. "My name is James—Colonel Alfred James."

He walked towards the machine, and John heard him speak. "You may descend, Highness," he said.

His eyes now accustomed to the darkness, J. B. saw a slim figure descend, and waited whilst the two men and the woman spoke together in a whisper. So far as he could gather, the lady said little, but the conversation continued for so long that John began to feel the cold.

"Will you come this way?" he called.

"Lead on," said the gruff voice of the smaller man, and the owner of Katterdown Cottage led the way to the gate, and, after some delay, opened it and ushered them across the road into the cottage.

The tall Colonel James followed, carrying two heavy bags; then came the girl, and thirdly the shorter of the two, a round, red-faced man with a slight moustache and a pair of small eyes that were set a trifle too close together.

The big man deposited the bags on the floor of the sitting-room.

"I present you, Mr. Watson, to Her Serene Highness Princess Irene of Maritza," he said. "Her Highness has a very dear friend in London, but, owing to certain family objections—in which I feel sure you will not be interested—it has been necessary for Her Highness to make a surreptitious and in some ways unauthorised trip to London. Whilst we realise that to land in England without a passport and without

the necessary authority from the Home Office constitutes a technical offence, my friend and I have gladly undertaken the risk to serve one to whose *fiancé* we are under a heavy debt of obligation."

All the time he had been speaking, John's wondering gaze had never left the girl's pale face. She stood with eyes downcast, hands lightly clasped in front of her, and only once during the interview did she look up. Presently John found his voice, though he spoke with extraordinary difficulty.

"I shall be happy to place my room at the disposal of Her Highness," he said.

"You have no telephone here?" asked the little man suddenly.

John shook his head. "No," he said, with a half smile, "we have nothing quite so modern at Katterdown Cottage, except a very modern bathroom leading from my room. May I show Your Highness the way?"

The tall man inclined his head gravely. "Will you go first, please?" he said.

Lighting a candle, John went up the narrow stairs, opened the door of his chamber, a cosy room with its old four-poster and its log fire smouldering in the grate.

"This will do very well," said the tall man, who had followed him. "In here, Your Highness."

He put his hand on the girl's arm and led her into the room. Then, coming out quickly, he closed the door behind him. At the foot of the stairs stood the little fat man, grotesquely huge in his leather coat, and as grotesquely ridiculous in his leather headgear.

"Her Highness is comfortable," said the bearded man. "You can go to work on the machine. Do you think you can get it right by the morning?"

"I ought to have it right in two hours," said the other, "but we couldn't possibly take off in the dark. I don't know the size of the field. It's plough-land, too, and that'll make it a bit more difficult, but I'll certainly be ready for you at daybreak." With that he was gone, leaving John alone with the Colonel.

"Will you come into the sitting-room?" asked John.

"I think not," replied James. "You see, Mr. Watson, my responsibility is a great one. Certain things have happened in London which have reduced Her Highness to the verge of despair. She has enemies—

personal enemies, you understand—who would not hesitate to take her life.”

He pulled up his leather coat and from his pocket slipped out a long-barrelled Browning and snapped back the jacket.

“I will not detain you any longer, Mr. Watson. You may go to bed with the full assurance that you have rendered an inestimable service to what was once a great ruling house.”

John laughed softly. “Unfortunately,” he said, “I have no bed, and if you mean that you are going to sit up all night, you have relieved me of a great embarrassment, for I should have had no place to offer you but the settee in my sitting-room. You are welcome to that.”

James shook his head. “I will remain here,” he said, and sat on the lower stair. Suddenly he got up. “Is your sitting-room beneath your bedroom?”

John nodded.

“Should I hear any—any noise above?”

“Undoubtedly,” said John. “Every floor in this old house creaks.”

“Then I will join you. It is inclined to be draughty here.”

He accompanied his host into the sitting-room and stripped the leather coat he was wearing, pulled off his helmet, and sank, with a luxurious sigh, into the deep armchair that John had vacated when the sound of the aeroplane’s engines had come to his ears.

“Christmas Eve, eh?” said the Colonel. He extracted a cigarette from his case and tapped it thoughtfully on his thumb-nail. Then, seeing John’s eyes resting on the pistol that lay on the table by his elbow, he asked: “Looks a little theatrical, don’t you think? I suppose firearms are not in your line, Mr. Watson?”

“I have an automatic at my London flat,” said John, with a smile, “but I can’t say that I get a great deal of pistol practice. Do you seriously mean that you would use that in certain extremities?”

The big man blew a cloud of smoke to the ceiling and nodded. “I mean that,” he said curtly.

“How fascinating!” said J. B. “And how un-Christmaslike!”

The other smiled broadly.

“There are one or two things about you that puzzle me,” J. B. went on slowly.

“Such as?”

“Well”—he hesitated—“did the Princess come to where the aeroplane was? I

presume it was somewhere outside of London?”

“We picked her up in a car,” said the other shortly.

“I see,” said J. B. “How queer!”

“What is queer?” frowned James.

“The whole thing,” said J. B. Watson. “You can’t say that it is a usual experience for a bachelor to have a princess drop on to him from the clouds. And, for a reason which you won’t want me to explain, I am especially interested in princesses. It goes back to a very old prophecy that was made by my nurse.”

There was a slight movement above their heads.

“Excuse me,” said James, and, rising quickly, ran up the stairs.

The sound of a low-voiced conversation floated down to John Watson, and, after a while, the footsteps of James upon the stairs. When he came in he was looking a little worried.

“Did Her Highness require anything?”

“Nothing.” This time the man’s voice was curt. “She wanted to know when the machine would be ready, that is all.”

They sat in complete silence for half an hour, till John rose.

“I’ll make some coffee, or I shall go to sleep. And you would like some coffee, too?”

James hesitated. “Yes, I think I should. I’ll come with you and see you make it,” he said.

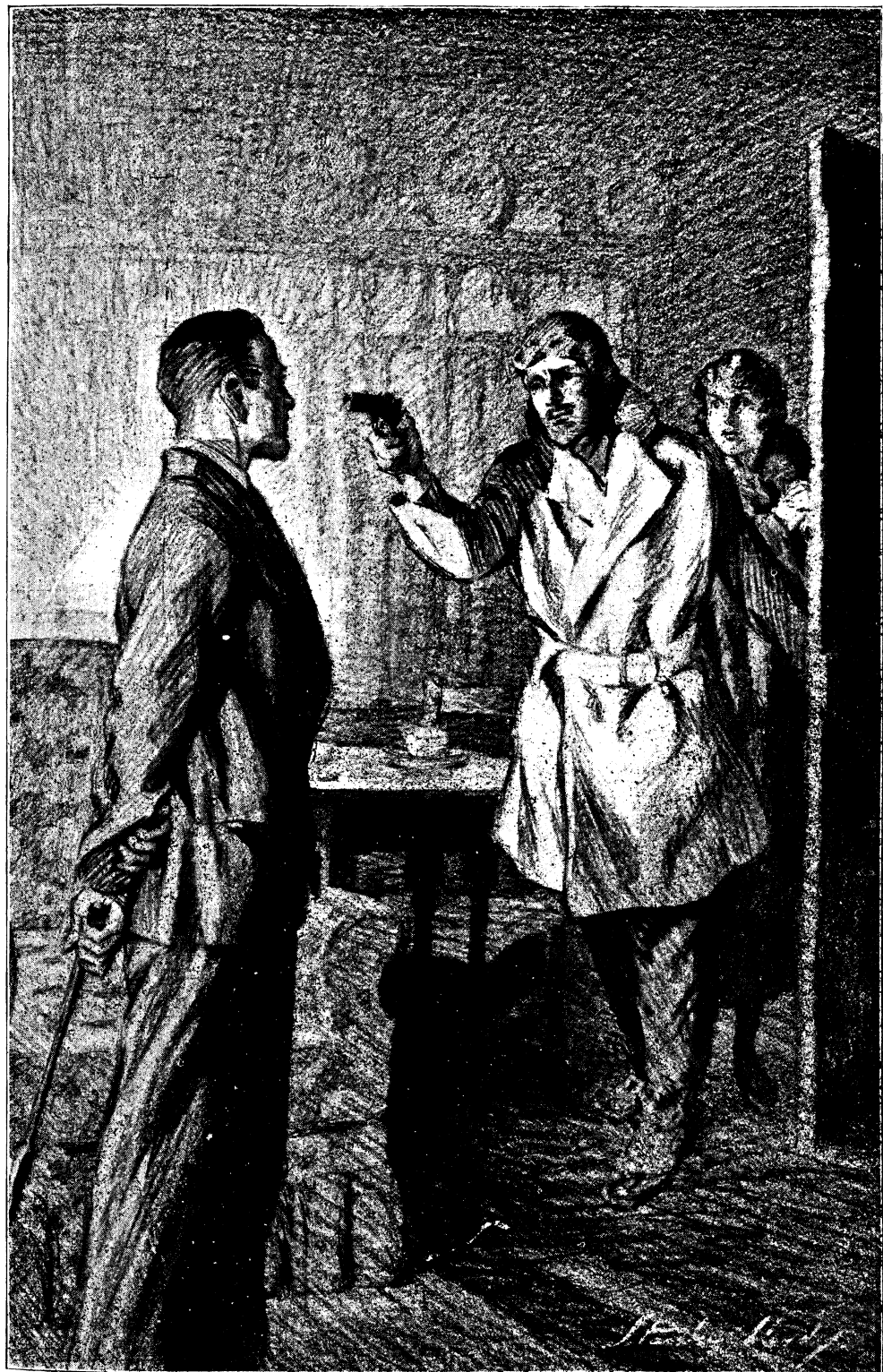
A sleeping Mowser lifted his wiry head inquiringly as the two men came into the kitchen, and watched them with unconcern, till, realising that nothing in the shape of food was imminent, he tucked his head between his paws and went to sleep again.

James took a chair and watched the percolator working without comment, and J. B. could not escape a feeling that he stood in relationship to the man as a convict stands to a prison guard, and this impression was strengthened when, the coffee made, his guest walked behind him to the sitting-room again. It was some time before the steaming cups had cooled sufficiently to drink, and John took a sip and made a wry face.

“Do you take sugar?” he asked. “Because I do.”

He went back to the kitchen, but this time the man did not accompany him. But he was standing in the doorway when J. B. returned.

“You took some time to find it,” he



“‘Give me that key,’ he said coldly, ‘or there’ll be a village tragedy that will mystify the reporters.’”

said gruffly, and saw that his tone was a mistake, for he went on, with a laugh and a return to his old suavity: "Forgive my infernal cheek, but this little adventure of ours has got on my nerves."

"I couldn't find it," said John. "My caretaker discovers a new place to hide her stores every visit I make to the cottage."

He dropped two lumps into his coffee and stirred it, and, finding that the bearded Colonel desired to do nothing more than to smoke an endless chain of cigarettes, he took down a book from the shelf and began to read.

Presently the heavy boots of the smaller man sounded on the paved pathway outside the cottage, and John jumped up. "That must be your friend," he said, and went to admit him.

The pilot, for such he seemed to be, came in, grimy of face and black of hands. "I've put it right," he said. "You can be ready to move as soon as you like. I have explored the field, and there's plenty of room to take her off."

"Go back to the machine and stand by," said the other sharply. And then, to John: "I am extremely obliged to you for your courtesy, and I'm glad we have not had to trespass longer on your hospitality. And may I add the thanks of the Princess to mine?"

"You may," said John.

James ran up the stairs and knocked at the bedroom door. "I am ready, Your Highness."

There was a pause, and then the key was turned and the door opened. It closed again upon the man, and all that John Watson could hear was the murmur of voices through the ceiling.

He laughed softly, pure joy in every note. So old Nurse Crawley had been right, after all, and a princess had come into his life, and the prophecy might yet be fulfilled.

The door was opened, two pairs of feet descended the stairs, and presently James stood in the light of the table-lamp which flowed through the open door of the sitting-room into the passage. In each hand he carried a bag, and behind him was a muffled figure in a fur coat, who kept her face steadily averted from John's eyes.

"I thank you again, Mr. Watson. If I have put you to any expense——"

"None whatever," said John politely.

He stood with his back to the fire and watched. He heard James put down his bag and turn the handle of the door, but it

did not move. He tried again, feeling for the bolts, and, finding that the door was of stout oak and the lock of ancient solidity, he came back to the sitting-room.

"I can't open your door, Mr. Watson."

"Very true," said John pleasantly; "very true!"

The man's brows gathered in a frown of suspicion. "What do you mean—very true?" he asked harshly.

"You can't open it because I've locked it, and the key is in my pocket," said John.

Instantly the automatic appeared in James's hand. "Give me that key," he said coldly, "or there'll be a village tragedy that will mystify the reporters. I ought to have shot you, anyway," he said, "and there's still time, if you don't—give me that key!"

John shook his head. His hands were still behind him, and, with a smothered exclamation of rage, the man pressed the trigger. There was a dull click.

"I took the precaution of unloading your pistol when you went upstairs an hour or two ago, Mr. James, or Colonel James, as the case may be," said John in his conversational tone. "I have also sent—*via* the back door—attached to the collar of a small and intelligent dog, an urgent message to the Bullham police to put in as early an appearance as possible. I've been expecting them for the last five minutes."

With a roar of rage, the big man sprang at him, and, as he did so, John withdrew his right hand and struck at his assailant with the poker, which he had held throughout the interview. Quick as a cat, the man dodged the blow, and in another instant he had gripped the other in his powerful hands. J. B. wrenched his left arm free and struck twice at the man, but his padded coat softened the blows, and it was not until a lucky blow caught Colonel James under the jaw that he went floundering to the ground. There was the sound of voices outside. John took the key from his pocket and flung it at the foot of the terrified girl.

"Open the door, quick, Miss Welford!" he hissed, and turned to leap on his half-maddened adversary, who had thrown open his coat and was groping for a second pistol. Before it could be drawn, the room was full of people, and he went down under the weight of two policemen and the local blacksmith.

\* \* \* \* \*

"This is the real miracle play," said John. "But to make the miracle complete, you've

got to stay here and have dinner, Miss Welford."

"But what I can't understand is, how you recognised me?" asked the puzzled girl.

"I not only know your name, but I know the whole story," said John. "You were working at the bank late, and these two gentlemen, who must have long planned the coup, broke into the vault to secure the very large sum in ready cash which would be on the bank premises on Christmas Eve. They then discovered that you were among the treasures that the bank contained——"

"I heard the noise and went down. They took me away with them in the car because they were afraid that I should identify them. When the machine came down, they swore that if I betrayed them they would

not only kill me, but kill you also. They had to explain me, so I became a princess. But how *did* you know that I was not?"

"I knew you were a princess all right," said John. "I've known you were a princess ever since I started peeping into your palace window."

She drew a long breath. "Oh, were *you* the man?" she said. "I've often wondered since. I never knew you."

"You know me now, and you will know me much better. Will you stay and have Christmas dinner with me?"

She looked at him quickly, then dropped her eyes. "I think I will," she said. "I owe you so much, Mr.——"

"On Christmas Day," he interrupted, "I am 'John,' even to my enemies." And she smiled.

"I don't feel like an enemy," she said.

## SHADOWS.

**I**N the waning afternoon,  
Or ever drear dusk slides  
Adown the rain-blurred hollows of the bleak hillsides,  
Play you in the parlour,  
Or dance you in the hall,  
See you the shadows of the holly on the wall?  
Ay, and 'tis as if the trill of the bird with the red breast  
Trembled through those shadows and then sighed to rest.

In the waning afternoon,  
Or ever storm-lights stray  
Adown the field, the coppice, and the pine-wood way,  
All as you come,  
And all as you go,  
See you the shadow of the fir across the snow?  
As the sign of the Cross upon a brow unstained  
Saw I that shadow as the wild light waned.

O holly-shadow wavering  
In the firelight blaze,  
Wilt wake again the heavenly strain of childhood's days?  
O dark fir-shadow  
Thrown athwart the snow,  
Lay the sign of the Cross upon my breast even now!—  
In the waning afternoon,  
Or e'er the last lights leave  
The hill, the wood, the snowdrift—for 'tis Christmas Eve!

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.

# A STOCKING FOR SANTA CLAUS

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY G. L. STAMPA

"DON'T talk to me about hanging up stockings," said Grandfather Barnes.

It was Christmas Eve. Grandmother Barnes had just come home from a long day's charing—she called it "obliging"—and Grandfather was nearly due to set out for his night's work in the box facing the charcoal fire in Endymion Avenue, where the road was dug up. The two grandchildren were more hopeful of Santa Claus than it is wise for the orphan grand-children of poor people to be, so he thought it well to damp their expectations.

"Everybody has their stockings hanged up, gran'far," little Jane protested. She was only six, so she spoke positively.

"There's a chap that never gets no stocking hung up for him," Grandfather assured her, "and he's one that needs it most, and that's Santa Claus!"

"Lumme," cried young Jim—he was seven—"he hasn't no call to, gran'far! Not with all them toys to choose from, what he takes round. I'd have a sword and a helmet, I would, if I be'd Santa Claus."

"The schoolma'am told you to say was, or were—one of 'em," Grandmother reproved him.

"A chap don't expeck to bother about grammar in his own home," Jim told her, with an air of righteous grievance. "Why don't he take what he wants out of his own bag, gran'far?"

"Why," Grandfather cried in horror, "you wouldn't have him take other people's things for hisself, would you? Suppose I run a nerrand for somebody. He gives me sixpence, say, and tells me, 'You take that parcel careful, Barnes, to Mrs. So-and-so.' I don't open it and nick what I fancy, do I?"

"But if it was your own parcel——"

"Ah, now you're talking!" Grandfather knocked out his pipe on the hob; began to refill it; reflected that it would be a job to make the tobacco last over Christmas, and put the half-filled pipe away in his pocket.

"If the things in his bag were his own, it wouldn't be stealing; but they ain't. Did you ever hear of a Santa Claus that was set up in business to carry presents to hisself? And if he was, you don't suppose it would be toys, do you? An old gentleman like me, Mr. Santa Claus be. Pipes and baccy—good plug like that black stuff in Mr. Smith's window—and jugs of beer; little drops of sperrits, perhaps. That's more like what he'd have in the bag for hisself. Seeing as he's only given guns and soldiers and such things——"

"And dolls," little Jane interrupted, "dolls and tea-cups and saucers, gran'far. That's what I want."

"And them," Grandfather conceded. "Well, seeing the sort of things in his bag, anyone with their senses would know they weren't for him, wouldn't they? And he knows it."

"Why doesn't he hang up a stocking, gran'far?" Jimmy inquired. "Or a sock?"

"Maybe," Grandfather thought, "he hasn't a spare one. I should fancy the poor old chap hasn't got much money to buy socks with. A lot of calls on him he has, I'm told. Famibly and all that."

"What's a famibly, gran'far?" little Jane wanted to know.

"Wife and children, or gran'children, might be."

"Well," Jim gasped, "I never knew he was married, gran'far! They don't never put her in the pictures—not Mrs. Santa Claus."

"She ain't much of a picture, sonny," Grandmother told him, "that's why."

"No," Grandfather denied, "'tain't that. She looks all right in her best shawl, and the hat that a kind lady gave her. Fair knock-out!" He winked at Grandmother. "And I wouldn't call her a drag on him, not her. It's the children that make a call on him. Takes a lot to keep them these days, don't it, mother?"

"It do," Granny agreed, "it do. But Mr. Santa Claus might find some little thing for children that have been good."

"I didn't mean *them*," Jim explained. "I meant them that wasn't any gooder than us."

"We're good sometimes," Jane claimed. "Next day 'fore yesterday I was."

"Well," Jim thought, "I was good the to-day before that—for me!"

Grandfather rose and began to put on the thick sweater that he wore at night. "The dratted cold crawls round the side of the fire," he always said. (The children often wished they could see the cold doing it.)

"Santa Claus is like you and me, Jim," he said. "He's a chap what wants to be as good as he can, but he finds it hard to come up to expectations these hard times. . . . Just hyst up this here sleeve, mother. The rheumatiz has fair copped my arm. . . . Expectations is too big, Jim, my boy. That's the trouble. We don't expect too much of you. Don't you expect it of him, or you'll go to be disappointed. Got his rent to pay, he has, the pore old chap. He'd do more for you if he could. Give him credit for that."

"They ought to hang up a stocking for him," Jim thought.

"With doll's tea-cups in," Jane explained.

"If they did hang up his stocking," Grandmother said, "he'd tell them to fill it with things for his children—or grandchildren, maybe. I make no doubt of that. I know him. Mind you put that old shawl over your legs, Tom. It's cruel cold at night."

"Right, missus," Grandfather promised. "Like to keep me under a glass case, you would; and make a fine ornament!"

"And keep the can by the fire," Grandmother continued, "old ornament! The tea will warm you up. I've put in an extra lot to-night."

"To drink your health," Grandfather chuckled. "Eh? I'll be all right, missus. I'll be all right." He lumbered down the passage. Grandmother and the children

followed him to the door. "Well, so long, kids. And mind you, Santa Claus does his best; and don't you look for too much, or worry grandma."

"All right, gran'far," Jim promised; "but if you see the old gent, you tell him to come to us. And if you see Mrs. Santa Claus, you tell her to tell him."

"And if I see any of the fambly," Grandfather grunted, "I'll tell them to tell her; and if I see his stocking hung on my watch-box, I'll make the mistake of thinking it's put there for me! Well, be good children."

"Mrs. Devonshire gave me a shilling extra," grandmother whispered, "and that's sixpence more for their Santa Clauses; and"—she pressed something into his hand—"you get a little something to warm you, Tom. Being Christmas time. . . ."

"Bless you, my gal!" said Grandfather. (The children always laughed when he called Grandmother that.) "T'would only make me sleep. You keep it to put a drop more to what you were getting for to-morrow afternoon, and we'll have it together."

"No, you have it to-night, just to please me, Tom. 'Tain't much I can do for you."

"'Tain't much as you can you don't," Grandfather told her. "And if a stocking was hung up for Santa Claus, he'd rather they put in things for *you*."

"I know, I know! But I want you to have something to-night. It's bitter out, Tom. The cold seems to strike right into you. I shall be upset if you don't take it."

"Well, well! It's an extra bit of bacey I'll have with it, missus. Cheers you up, sitting there all night. A nappy Christmas to you, my gal!"

He trudged off down the street, turning once to wave his hand.

"I wis they'd hang up a stocking for poor old Santa Claus, gramma," little Jane said, when they had gone back to the kitchen.

"And that he'd find it just before he came to us," Jim added. "If there was mericles or fairy people nowadays, they might do it, mightn't they? Hang up a stocking for him?"

"They would," Grandmother agreed, "for there's nobody deserves it better; but mericles went out hundreds of years ago, and fairies long before my time. Howsomever, there's a little bit of jam I've got for your supper, and that's nearly as good as a mericle."

"Yes," Jim agreed; "but I think there ought to be a stocking hung up for Santa Claus, and I don't see why there isn't a



mericle or a fairy left to do it. They've no business to go out before Janie and me was borned. We'd like 'em in our times! Perhaps they'll come in again, gramma?"

"Ah," said Grandmother, "I don't see much chanst of it. Some fashions go right out—like crinolines, and mericles and fairies. Now you fetch the basin, Jim, very careful. You've got to be washed well before you go to bed, being Christmas Eve."

"If there was mericles," Jim observed ruefully, "I'd have one to be washed without knowing it!"

"I wouldn't," little Jane declared. "I'd have a stocking for Santa Claus. Full of doll's things, and cakes—ooh!"

"And nuts," Jim cried, "and oranges, and sweets. Golly! Gramma, there *ought* to be a stocking for old Santa Claus! 'Cause he'd be sure to give some of the things to people like us. I don't understand why no one puts up a stocking for him."

"Ah," said Grandmother, "there's lots of things we'll never know in this world! And I'll never make out where all the dirt comes from that boys get on their hands and knees!"

## II.

"THERE'S one poor chap who never has a stocking hung up for him," Mr. Rivers said, "and that's poor old Santa Claus himself; and if you come to think of it, he needs it most."

The Rivers children were sitting on their father's knees before they went to bed, and their mother was making chains out of coloured paper for the Christmas decorations.

"Now, Jack," Mrs. Rivers protested, "don't tease the children. Santa Claus doesn't want presents, my dears. Look at the lovely bag of things that he has!"

"He can't take them for himself," Mr. Rivers stated. "They're given to him to give away. If I gave you a cake to take to the little boy next door, you couldn't eat it, could you, Bob?"

"Well," Bob said thoughtfully, "I'd get in a jolly row if I did, wouldn't I? And it wouldn't be fair, would it? Who gives things to Santa Claus, daddy?" Bob was seven.

"Providence," Mr. Rivers stated.

"And who gives them to Providence?" Maisie inquired. She was six.

"Providence buys them," Mr. Rivers said, "of course."

"And where does he get all the money from?" Bob wanted to know.

"That," Mr. Rivers declared, "is Providence's great difficulty, and mine."

"Well, but where *does* he get the money? Out of a money-box?"

"Out of a money-box called the bank," Mr. Rivers informed him.

"And how does it get there?" Maisie demanded.

"Sometimes it doesn't, my dear. I could tell you how it gets *out* of poor old Santa Claus's bank!"

"How does it?"

"Well, he has a lot of expenses, poor chap. You see, he has a family."

"Have you got one?" Maisie asked.

"Rather! A family is a wife and children."

"Well," Bob cried, "I never knew that before—not that Santa Claus was married. Why don't they put Mrs. Santa Claus in the pictures?"

"She is so beautiful that nobody would look at Santa Claus then," Mr. Rivers explained. He bowed to his wife.

"Jack," said Mrs. Rivers, "you're a donkey!"

"She only means you're silly," Maisie consoled him. "I expect he gives them lots of presents, doesn't he—his famberly?"

"All he can afford, poor chap! He's pretty hard up this year."

"Don't you listen," Mrs. Rivers told the children. "Santa Claus hasn't done at all badly this year. He's been helped by his careful wife. I shouldn't call him hard up at all."

"What's hard up, dad?" Maisie wanted to know.

"Peculiarly embarrassed owing to the multiplicity of his family responsibilities," Mr. Rivers explained.

"I think mother *meant* donkey," Maisie informed him severely, "'cause you're only saying that to pull my foot."

"You ought to say 'leg,'" Bob informed her. "Now *she's* a donkey, isn't she, dad? But I think you are, too, because you didn't mean nothing."

"What daddy means," Mrs. Rivers explained, "is that, though he gives us such a lot, he would give us more if he could."

"That's daddy," Bob objected. "We're talking about Santa Claus. I think he ought to have a stocking, but I don't know what he'd call up the chimney for."

"Things for other people," Mrs. Rivers declared. "A new fur coat for his beautiful wife—he said she was—and a lot more toys for his children. He is like that—a good

old thing, who always puts himself last.”  
She stroked Mr. Rivers’s hair.

“He’d have a pipe,” Mr. Rivers said,  
“and a pocket-book, just the things that  
mummie and you are  
giving me! Perhaps  
he’d have a few things  
for other people, too.”

“Poor peoples!”

Maisie cried. “Some-  
bodies don’t have  
Santa Clauses, like we  
do, cook says, and I  
was solly for them.”

“I expect he’d ask  
for things for other  
peoples,” Bob said  
thoughtfully. “‘Cause  
it’s his proper business  
to give things away,

isn’t it? . . . Daddy, I  
know! S’pose *we* hang up a  
stocking for him? A big one,  
like you’ve lent Maisie and  
me. And s’pose we put in  
things for poor people. So  
he could give them to those  
that haven’t—haven’t—what  
mummie calls it when I  
mustn’t have any more to  
cat.”

“Those who haven’t  
enough,” Mr. Rivers said.  
“Yes, that’s rather a good  
idea, Bob . . . What are  
*you* going to give?”

“Oh-h-h,” said Bob, “I  
was s’pecting he’d put them  
in himself; but then they  
wouldn’t be presents, would  
they? You can’t give pre-  
sents to your own self, can  
you? And if nobody didn’t  
give nobody their things,  
there wouldn’t be any pre-  
sents. I never thought of  
that before, dad. Well, he  
gives us an awful lots of  
things. ‘Sides, we’ve got a  
good dada and mamma,  
haven’t we?”

“Quite a good dada,”  
Mrs. Rivers thought.

“Not half a bad little  
mamma,” Mr. Rivers ad-  
mitted.

“Well,” Bob decided, after reflection,  
“I’ll give him some of my soldiers, and one  
of the cakes with icing on, and the sailor  
suit I’ve nearly growed out of, and two  
pennies, and”—he sighed, took a deep



“All right, gran’far,  
Jim promised; ‘but if  
you see the old gent,  
you tell him to come  
to us. And if you see  
Mrs. Santa Claus, you  
tell her to tell him.’”

breath, and finally set his mouth with an air of pained but heroic resolve—"he can have some oranges and mustels and almonds, and I won't eat so much."

"My little man," Mrs. Rivers cried, "you're daddy's little son!"

She tried to find her handkerchief, but as she couldn't—Santa Claus might take ladies a few pockets—she helped herself to her husband's and wiped her eyes.

"I'll give him my tea-set," Maisie offered, "for a poor little girl, and a dolly—pe'haps—and—like Bob. You know. I don't want poor little girls not to have things. I don't want *anybody* not to have things, dad."

"Being mummie's little girl," Mr. Rivers observed. "Funny little mummie's funny little girl!"

"Why is mummie funny?" Maisie wanted to know. Little girls always do want to know, especially when they grow big.

"So that she could be a funny little girl's mummie, I expect," Mr. Rivers thought.

"'Spect that's why you're a funny daddy! Well, you get a big stocking."

Mr. Rivers looked at Mrs. Rivers, and she looked at him. He nodded once, and she nodded twice.

"I think," she proposed, "we'd better have an old pillow-case. That will hold the things better. Let's go and see what we can find."

She found the old pillow-case, and the children picked out the toys which they were prepared to give to Santa Claus to be passed on to poor little children. Bob put in a cardboard box which he filled with leaden soldiers and two guns. One gun wouldn't fire pellets any more, but one would. He hesitated a long time before he put that in.

"Of course," he observed, "a thing wouldn't be any good to another chap if you didn't want it yourself. I 'spect Santa Claus will give it to some *very* poor little boy."

He added two books, and some foreign stamps, and a drawing-slate. ("It isn't broken *much*, and I can use yours sometimes, can't I, May?") He considered for a long while over a ship, but finally shook his head.

"A feller can't give away everything," he decided.

Maisie contributed a doll's tea-set and a damaged toy piano. "Well, I play the proper one now, don't I?"—She looked at her dolls for a long time, but she was like

the mother who could not spare any of her too numerous children.

"Bess is a silly old thing," Bob advised her, "and one arm has come off; but some girl might like her if she hadn't got one."

"Oh," Maisie cried, "I *couldn't* spare Bess! She'd cry after her mother."

"Well, give him her mother, too!"

"Oh, Bob, her mother's *me*!"

"How about the nigger boy?" Mr. Rivers inquired. "Poor old black Sambo."

"I—I think they wouldn't be kind to him," Maisie objected, "'cause he's black. I don't mind."

"We'll put in some clothes instead," Mrs. Rivers proposed. "There are quite a lot that Maisie won't *really* need any more, and a poor little girl would be very glad of them."

"I fancy a poor little girl would be very glad of a doll," Mr. Rivers observed. "As Bob says, 'other fellows' rather like the things you like yourself. You've a lot of dolls, Maisie. Surely you don't want all of them?"

"But I'm their mother," Maisie protested, "and pe'haps they'd cry after me."

"Umph! Perhaps the poor little girl——"

Mrs. Rivers stopped him with a touch on the arm. "Don't make the first self-sacrifice too hard, Jack," she whispered. "She's only six."

Mr. Rivers nodded. They left the day nursery, and Mrs. Rivers got out the clothes which could be spared. There was a suit of Bob's, also an overcoat. There were more spare things of Maisie's. She was not such a hard wearer as her brother, and her things were quite good after she outgrew them. Mrs. Rivers put in a pair of boy's shoes which weren't really past Bob's wearing, to preserve some equilibrium between the sexes.

Next they went downstairs and put in a lot of cakes and oranges and nuts and sweets, including a box of chocolates which was the children's very own.

"I don't really want that brown suit," Mr. Rivers remarked. "It's quite decent, only you made me buy the grey, one, Nan, and now you won't let me wear the brown. But the pillow-case will burst if we ram in any more."

"I've an old bolster-case, too," Mrs. Rivers told him. "It's the first that has gone since we were married, Jack. They've lasted well, haven't they? There's a dress I thought I might put in, if we had that instead."

"A bolster-case would look more like a stocking," he thought. "There's that about it."

So Santa Claus's stocking became a bolster-case, and even that was bulging before they finished.

"And where shall we hang it, daddy?" Bob inquired.

"Besides of the chimbley!" Maisie cried. "Then he'll find it when he comes down with our presents!"

"He won't know it's for him, will he?" Bob doubted.

"We'd better put a card on it," his father suggested; and he found one and wrote on it with his fountain pen, in big print letters:

FOR SANTA CLAUS  
AND HIS FAMILY.  
A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

"We'll hang it on the wardrobe," he said, "just beside the nursery fireplace, and if it's gone in the morning, you'll know he's had it. Now it's time you went to bed. I'll hang it up while you undress."

He hung it up accordingly.

"There!" he said. "Now that's done. My word, it's full! I should think it holds everything that a poor little boy and girl could want."

"Yes," Maisie agreed; but Bob looked doubtful.

"Some fellers," he said, "are very fond of ships!"

He wandered off to the day nursery, and wandered back, looking very solemn, carrying his old ship.

"You put it in, dad," he said rather chokily. "I don't care! He'll be a very poor little boy, won't he?"

"Pe'haps," Maisie said wistfully, "a poor little girl would be good to Black Sambo. Then he wouldn't cry."

She fetched Black Sambo, and put his cap straight very carefully, and kissed him twice, and handed him over to her father.

### III.

"We must take the bag away when they are asleep," Mr. Rivers told Mrs. Rivers, after the children had gone downstairs. "I suppose you'll be able to find people to give the things to, after Christmas?"

"It isn't much trouble to find people who need things, dear," Mrs. Rivers sighed; "but I'd rather they had them for Christmas. If I knew a poor family that

the things would just suit, I'd like to give the 'stocking' as a whole, just as it is."

"And put it down the chimney, eh?" he laughed.

"I would really."

"Mrs. Santa Claus!"

"Well, you needn't laugh. You'd like to do it just as much as I should. Only men are such superior creatures. When they do silly things, they always make out it is 'just to please the wife.' I expect that is what they have wives for!"

"I only know one other good reason."

"I suppose I'm expected to say 'what's that?'"

"You!"

"Old donkey! Old dear! Now, seriously, Jack, can't we play at Santa Claus? Really and properly? If we knew the right house, we could prop the 'stocking' up against the door, and then knock and run away. Like we used to when we were children. Do you remember how we did runaway knocks at old Miss Jones's, when we were ever so little? And how at last she waited behind the door, and rushed out and chased us? And you pulled me along, and she caught us because I couldn't go fast enough, and you wouldn't leave me? And how surprised we were that she didn't smack us. Poor old soul! Let's do it like that!"

"But who's to be the Miss Jones?" Mr. Rivers inquired.

"Well, let's ask cuckoo." That was their name between themselves for cook. She did not know that. She was an excellent elderly woman, who had been with them ever since they were married. Her name for them was 'My children,' but they did not know that either. She had a large circle of acquaintances in the neighbourhood, and sometimes Mr. Rivers spoke of her as "the registry office." He and she always pretended to be frightened of each other, but they were not.

They went down to the kitchen. They said it was to have their stirrs at the Christmas pudding. Apology was needed for invasion of cook's domain.

"The ninth you've made for us, cook," Mr. Rivers observed. "I never thought you'd put up with the missus for so long. But I suppose if I could——"

"It's nothing to what I put up with," Mrs. Rivers declared, "is it, cook?"

"Go on with you," cook cried, "the pair of you! And what is it you've come

down to my kitchen about? 'Tain't the pudding. I can see that."

They told cook about the bolster-case-stocking for Santa Claus, and what the children had put in. She said, "Bless the children!"

They mentioned what they had put in themselves, and she wiped her eyes and said "God bless you!" and then she added: "Bless me! I'll put in a shilling myself! But who's it to be for?"

They explained that this was the very difficulty about which they had come to consult her, as she knew all about the neighbourhood; and they further explained their project of leaving it at a door, and knocking, and running away, as they did when they were children, and she said, "and ain't quite finished growing up yet!"

"Children keep you young," Mr. Rivers apologised.

"And that's a fact," cook agreed.

"And a husband," Mrs. Rivers remarked.

"Men are only big boys."

"Depends a good bit on their wives," cook thought. (She was a wise woman.) "Howsomever, I don't say as I hold with knocking at doors and running away. Nice thing if you were both taken up by the police! Christmas time and all! And I don't see the need. There's a way ready to your hand." She turned a lath of the Venetian blind and pointed through it to Mr. Barnes sitting in his sentry-box, behind the charcoal brazier, guarding the holes which are always dug at frequent intervals where there are tram lines.

"Oh," said Mr. Rivers, "old Barnes! Nice, respectable old chap, and a decent wife. We should have had them for caretakers at the club, but they had children, and that barred them."

"Two orphan grand-children," cook stated, "boy and girl, about the age of yours, but smaller, not having me to cook for them, or too much to cook. Very respectable woman. Goes out. You had her for a day or two when Mrs. Smith was ill. A woman you haven't got to watch. And the old gentleman is a nice man, and much obliged for the bread and cheese you told me to give him. The son was killed by an accident, and the wife went soon after—consumption. So the old people took the boy and girl. They have a rare struggle to make both ends meet, and stint themselves for the children, they do."

"Oh, Jack," Mrs. Rivers cried, "he's the very one! Poor man! I do think you

people at the club were mean not to have them! As if people didn't have children!"

"When they're asleep," Mr. Rivers said, "we'll get the 'stocking,' and carry it out to him."

"I wish he'd fall asleep, too," Mrs. Rivers said. "Does he ever, cook?"

"I don't spend my time watching him," cook observed, "with the cooking of this house to do! But what else are watchmen for?"

"I thought they were supposed to watch," Mr. Rivers observed.

"Bless you, sir, there's nothing to watch at night. He's just there to keep up the fire and the lanterns to warn traffic off. Has a good night's rest between, he tells me. The cold and his rheumatism wake him enough for his job, he says. You'll catch him asleep all right, just before you lock up. Not to say that I approve of such ways of doing things! Still, if the—the bolster-case is too heavy for you and the mistress, I'm here to lend a hand. And now, if you'll do your stirs at the pudding, I'll be able to get on with my work. Reminds me of the one six years ago, when the master was in France at the War, and didn't have his stir; only we made that long before to send out to him, if you recollect, ma'am; and I've still got the letter he wrote me about it. If we put in a bit of the pudding, now, Mrs. Barnes would cook it all right for them. She does a little cooking sometimes, to oblige. There's always something in a woman that can cook!"

"Self-praise, cook!" Mr. Rivers said. "Self-praise! I shall never forget how I enjoyed your pudding out in France. But I don't know that even your puddings come up to your devilled haddock. However, it's such a long time since I've had any for breakfast—"

"Ah," cook grinned, "the master's an artful one, ma'am, ain't he?"

#### IV.

GRANDFATHER BARNES seemed to feel the cold a good deal that evening. It made him restless, he told cook, when she took him the ham sandwiches (considering cheese inappropriate to the season) at half-past ten.

"Don't expect I'll close my eyes to-night," he declared. "You'd never believe how that dratted cold comes hanging round the fire, waiting to dodge past, if I have a few minutes' doze and let it get a trifle low. Well, here's a merry Christmas to

you, ma'am, and my thanks to your master and mistress, and wishing them the same. Nice little children they've got; 'bout the age of mine; and looking out for their Santa Clauses, I make no doubt. Ah!" He sighed. "'Tain't much as he'll leave for my boy's Jim and Jane; and can't keep them from expecting more than they'll get. I was saying to-night as the chap that wants his stocking filled is Santa Claus, and he'd have it full of things for his missus and children. . . . His boy's children. . . . Ah!"

"Well," cook said, "there's no harm in wishing for things; and if I was you, I'd go to sleep and dream of a stocking for yourself; and perhaps you'll wake up and find it here. You never know! Well, good night, Mr. Barnes, and a merry Christmas to you."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," Mr. Barnes acknowledged. "Thank you kindly. I don't complain for myself, but I'm a poor old Santa Claus that hasn't much in his bag for the youngsters. That's what troubles me."

He sat staring at the fire, and thinking of the things that he would like to have for them, and for "the missus," till he nearly dozed off, but roused with a sudden nod. He got up and put more charcoal in the brazier and attended to the lamps; had another swig at the tea in the can; sat down and stared at the fire again.

Somehow his thoughts ran upon a Santa Claus stocking for himself. . . . The thoughts turned to dreams. . . . He seemed to be dressed like Santa Claus, and he had an enormous bag, and there were all sorts of things in it, and he took it home, and they were all asleep. Even "the missus" did not rouse as usual to get some breakfast for him. So he got the gifts out of the bag and arranged them on the floor at the children's feet; and on a chair beside his wife's head; and then he found something in the bag which he knew was for himself. He always seemed to be taking it out, but never getting it right outside the bag. "I'll have it this time," he thought, and made a great pull. . . . And then he woke with a jerk,

and found himself staring at the charcoal fire.

"Bless my soul," he cried, "I've slept a mighty long time! It's half burnt down!"

He got up hastily and refilled the brazier. Then he attended to a couple of the red lamps, which were burning rather feebly. After that he swung his arms to and fro, and stamped with his feet to try to warm himself a little.

"A chill and a bit more rheumatiz," he grumbled, "that's what's in the stocking for Santa Claus! An old fool I be! Rum how things get into your head and don't go out. Santa Claus's stocking indeed! An ass I was, not to put the old girl's shawl over my legs, as she told me, and freezing, too. . . . Well, I'll find the shawl for my stocking, hanging on the peg."

He went back into his box, and stretched out his hand for the shawl, and he touched something very bulky standing up in a corner—something too big to hang from a peg. He passed his hand down it. It felt like the leg of a giant's stocking.

"Must be dreamin'!" he gasped. He clutched his arms and pinched them to test his senses. 'If I ain't, someone has put this here for me to mind. 'Tain't for me." He struck a match to look at it, and then he saw the card fastened on top of the long bundle.

"Mercy on me!" he cried. "It's a mericle! And I thought they was done!"

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Mr. Barnes's dream worked out pretty correctly, except that "Gramma" was up when he went in. She had risen before time to cook him an egg and bacon, as a breakfast Santa Claus. She nearly dropped the frying-pan when she saw the burden over his shoulder.

"Surely to goodness, Tom," she gasped, "you ain't got a body in that there piller-case? Tom, you've never taken anything? Not for me? Or for *them*? . . . Tom . . . ?"

"Don't you get the wind up, old gal," he said. "There ain't no body, and I ain't no burglar, and it ain't no piller-case. It's a stocking for Santa Claus!"



# THE HATED HORDE

By LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY, F.R.G.S.

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

THE puppy scratched himself idly and snapped at a passing fly. Fortunately he missed it; for the insect with the lanky body joined to the thorax by only a thin thread was not a fly at all, but a mason-wasp with a sting that would paralyse a man's hand for days. But ignorance is bliss, and the pup did not know what an escape he had had. He was very bored and wanted something to play with.

Around him a number of dogs of all ages were sleeping in the scanty shade of this jungle in the Central Provinces of India, where most of the trees were low and thorny, mere scrub, and the leaves of the occasional taller ones were withering and falling to the parched ground. For it was the hot weather, and India spitefully selects the summer, when shade is indeed badly needed, as the appropriate season to denude herself of foliage. So the dogs—prick-eared, fox-like animals with blackish tails and sleek hides of a deep rust colour above, paler below—panted in the heat and crawled further in under the bushes to avoid the scorching sun.

Only youthful energy could resist its ardour, so the six-weeks-old pup sat out in its burning rays and longed for a playfellow. His brothers and sisters had surlily refused to be disturbed. As he meditated on the dullness of life his eye was caught by a passing shadow. Over the bleached grass moved a gaunt beast, humpbacked and grotesque, grey with brown-striped sides and a ridge of bristling hair along the backbone. His face was hideous with the perpetual snarl revealing the formidable teeth. He was a hyæna, big as a wolf, stronger-jawed than a tiger, but smaller-hearted than a mouse.

With quick, nervous movements he sneaked by the sleeping dogs, watching them apprehensively as he went. His eyes gleamed with a savage light as they fell on the pup, which had started up, uncertain whether to growl at the stranger or run after it and beg it to play. The beast was

hungry, and the confiding youngster, which finally decided on tail-wagging friendliness, would be a toothsome morsel. But the hyæna took a second look at his companions reposing around, and, much against the grain, came to the conclusion that it was well to let sleeping dogs lie. He did not want the pack at his tail, so he trotted on swiftly.

He was wise. Another far braver animal, which had also been watching the puppy from the shade of a big boulder on a rocky hillock close by, had already come to the same conclusion. Yet it was a panther, as plucky and daring a beast as lives; and its kind are very fond of little dogs—to eat. But they know their limitations, and this one was no fool. She felt herself a match in fair fight for ten or more of the small animals, hardly as big as jackals, sleeping under the bushes. But she had no desire for an affair with scores of them; and she knew that those she saw formed only a small part of a pack of wild dogs, the most dreaded, most destructive denizens of the Indian jungle. Even a tiger will run from them, and well for him if they are content to let him go.

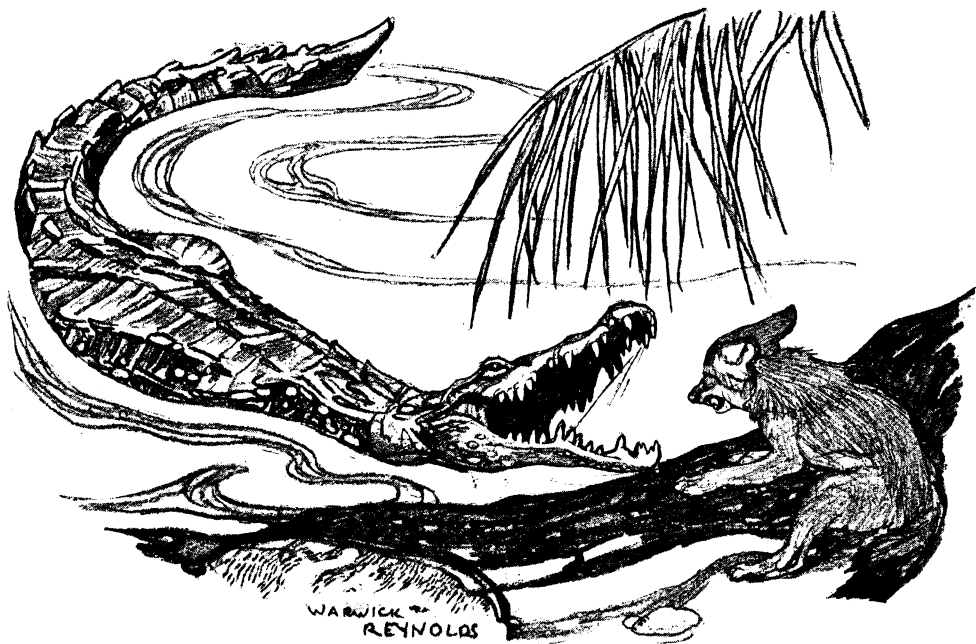
For if they desire his death they will achieve it without fail. They will follow him unfalteringly, relentlessly, in daylight and dark; follow him in the blazing sunshine, when the hot ground burns his pads and the heat melts the rolls of fat under his striped skin; follow him through the starlit night, when the scared deer start up from under his nose and he dare not turn aside to snatch at them. They will give him no rest, no sleep, scarcely a moment's respite to lap up a mouthful of warm water from some drying-up pool. Like the Furies they will run by his side, before, behind, around him, always just out of his reach, until, exhausted and drunken with fatigue, he begins to stagger blindly, carelessly, and gives one or more the chance that they have been waiting for, the chance for a snap, a raking bite worse than a sabre-cut,

that will rip him open and send him stumbling on with his feet entangled in his trailing entrails. Then the end will be as swift as its coming has been slow.

The bored puppy did not know that he was such a terrible fellow racially, although the watching panther did, and he sat down again disappointedly when the hyæna refused to play. What was a little dog to do? There seemed to be no mischief to get into at the moment. He had not the resources of his civilised cousins. There were no boots to chew. He could not lie out in the middle of a road and tempt Fate in the shape of motor-cars, for the jungle,

on her more direct way up the precipitous hill, to climb in the dark the fifty-feet stone walls now rent in places by the intruding roots of trees.

For inside the fort she found her favourite diet of dog. Such dogs! So different from these cunning, dangerous brutes now asleep below her—fat, stupid, easily snapped-up tame dogs belonging to the sepoy, on hot nights sleeping confidently outside the barrack rooms, simply offering themselves as a meal to any daring panther that would drop down inside the walls, gallop silently on velvet feet through the barracks, snatch up an overfed, yelping pariah dog and



"To his horrified amazement, the end split open suddenly into a huge mouth with overlapping yellow fangs."

full of dangers as it was, was yet innocent of such death-dealing monsters. There certainly was a road winding painfully up the side of a steep hill that rose abruptly about three miles away, a strangely-formed, precipitous rock, crowned with the ruinous walls of an old Indian fort tenanted by a lonely British subaltern and fifty sepoy. But the only traffic along it was the bullock-cart that, bringing supplies to the small garrison, crawled up or rattled down it once a fortnight. No chance of mischief there. The puppy did not even know the road, for wild dogs keep to the jungle. But the panther did. She crossed it often at night

vanish to a chorus of frenzied barks from its terrified companions. Ah, very different indeed! And so the big spotted cat turned her resentful eyes from the tempting puppy and looked regretfully at the distant fort on the hill-top standing out against the sky. She dare not venture near it by daylight.

So danger passed by the small dog that knew nothing of it and felt well disposed to all the world. He was an affectionate little fellow, but very ignorant. He did not know, for instance, that Kipling had written a story about his race, and most animals in the jungle to whom that happens become insufferable snobs afterwards. He was not



even aware of the fact that naturalists dignified him by a sonorous Græco-Latin name that hardly any of India's three hundred and twenty million humans would know if they heard it. Most of them would have called the pup a *jungly kutta*, which means "wild dog."

Now, *kutta* is all right as a name. Even the most aristocratic fox-terrier that trots behind its soldier-officer master along the mall of an Indian garrison town does not object to be called that. But *jungly* is an altogether different matter. It is not considered a polite term in India. It means an uncouth, countrified, even savage and wild individual. It was altogether too rude a name to apply to the mild-mannered puppy that finally in despair got up and walked over to nose some sleeping small acquaintances of another litter under the next bush to his own family's. He only wanted to ask them if they would like a romp. Two of them grunted drowsily and never opened an eye. But the third growled, looked up and, seeing who it was, snarled angrily. He was a bad-tempered, surly little brute, who really deserved to be called Jungly. From the hour that his eyes first opened on the world he had disliked Kutta, who had been born on the same day and within a few yards of him. The other pups of the two litters, being near neighbours, always played together, but not Jungly. He snarled at all about him, even his own family; but his bitterest hatred was reserved for the good-natured Kutta.

Now, hot and sleepy, he snapped viciously at his enemy and, angry at his challenge being ignored, rushed at him with bared teeth. The other, playfully disposed as he was, was yet no coward, and instantly the foreground was filled with yapping, fighting puppy dog. The elders of the pack looked up in annoyance at being disturbed, and presently one big dog rose and separated them. Growling fiercely, his spiteful fury unabated, Jungly was forced reluctantly away. His opponent, however, bore no malice and, wagging his tail, went off to romp with the other awakened puppies.

That evening the pack moved on. They are so destructive to animal life in the jungle that they can never remain long in any one part of it. Hunting mostly, though not always, by night, they drive through the woodland like a consuming fire, killing as they go and scaring the harmless beasts before them. Alas for the poor cheetah or sambhur hind with her fawn that they come

upon! The distracted mother-deer tries to face all fronts at once to shield her offspring with her own body, while she strikes bravely at the leaping foes with sharp forefoot. But in vain. A scream of mortal agony from the wretched fawn behind her tells her that the teeth of the wild dogs are letting out its little life; and as she turns to it in despair she exposes herself, and the fierce brutes bring her down on the bleeding body of her young.

Even the big sambhur stag, fleet as it is, with branching horns perhaps four feet long and the power to strike a man dead with a downward blow from its knife-sharp forehoof, cannot hope to escape its relentless pursuers that, tracking by sight or scent, follow it to its death.

The residential killers of the jungle—that is, the tigers, panthers and other such beasts of prey that confine themselves to their own little beats of a few square miles—dread the coming of the hundred-footed nomads almost as much as do the harmless animals that both feed on. For the passing of a horde of these hated hunters sweeps bare of life a vast tract of the forest, since all the deer and pig not killed flee far away. Even a small pack can effect a wide clearance. Then the tigers and their fellow-slayers have to travel a very long way for a meal.

Kutta grew up, like his fellows, a canine Hun of Attila. From the day when he was first big enough to join in the chase and, with two or three other youngsters, pull down a wailing fawn, while the elders kept the mother at bay, he showed a courage and resolution that marked him out as a future leader. He was fleet-footed, untiring, relentless in pursuit and foremost in attack. Yet when the dread hunters rested, full-fed and contented, under the trees at noon none were so kindly or gentle as he. The succeeding generations of puppies knew it. They played with him, pulled his tail, bit him with their sharp little first-teeth, clambered fearlessly over him as he lay on the ground, and treated him with no respect whatever. But he stood between them and the bullies of the tribe, and many a fight he had on their account with his steadfast enemy Jungly.

The other dog's unchanging, unrelenting hate was extraordinary. In a pack there are frequent fights, savage battles that bring deep wounds, even death. Some of the animals are readier to quarrel with certain others than with the rest.

But this persistent, unremitting hostility savoured more of the world of men than of beasts.

Kutta never began an encounter with Jungly—in fact, avoided him when he could, not from want of courage, but from sheer kindness of disposition. But all in vain; the more he drew back, the more the other urged on the quarrel. Yet Kutta always got the best of it, but with his usual good nature never pressed his advantage and let his discomfited adversary draw off, bleeding but unsated, to lick his wounds and snarl his hatred of the victor.

Sometimes in big bands, sometimes in smaller packs, the wild dogs ravaged the wide district. Sometimes they swept in full cry through the long spear-grass in open jungle. Sometimes they quested through deep forest under giant sal trees, where the large, withered leaves fallen from the grey-barked branches crackled loudly under the hurrying feet. Chance led them through dense and tangled undergrowth that once had been luxuriant gardens, in the heart of which they stumbled on a ruined palace with cool, dim halls and paved courts, smothered in rank and noxious vegetation. In a retired chamber into which a faint light struggled through the delicate stone tracery of carved windows choked with climbing greenery, a room in which, centuries before, harem beauties had reclined idly on silken divans, the hungry pack nosed out a wild sow lying on the marble floor with her litter of new-born piglings. Small chance had she or they when the sharp-toothed slayers found them. But retribution fell on one dog at least, when he trod by accident on a black cobra gliding over the cracked pavement to escape the trampling paws. For Death often lay in wait for the killers, too, and sometimes in strange guise.

Through the Central Provinces Jungle flows the Tapti river. In the rains it rushes in a broad yellow flood between caving banks on its way to the Indian Ocean. In the dry season it idles along under the trees, here murmuring in shallows bare inches deep over stretches of sheet rock, there gliding silently through deep pools in which silvery-scaled great mahseer lurk. Along its course lay a favourite hunting-ground of the pack, for naturally game was most plentiful near water. Occasionally, after a morning's chase, the dogs came down to drink on the banks, where in the hot sunshine lay great logs of driftwood, or so they

seemed—stranded tree-trunks, rough-barked and massive.

The older, wiser animals avoided them and counselled the rest to do likewise. But Youth is obstinate, and one headstrong, inquisitive youngster, who knew better than his elders, approached a large log to smell it. To his horrified amazement, the end split open suddenly into a huge mouth with overlapping yellow fangs, while two vicious little eyes gleamed above it. As the frightened dog backed away to what he thought a safe distance, the log swung swiftly round as on a pivot, struck the wretched animal a paralysing blow with its other end, sweeping him off his feet with broken legs and hurling him stunned into the water. Then, with another wag of its deadly tail, the crocodile, for such was the seeming log, dived in after its victim and dragged it down out of sight. After that the pack lost all interest in stranded driftwood.

When the summer fires swept through the forest the wild dogs hung round the fleeing jungle dwellers and fed fat on the terrified deer. The flames had no terrors for the fleet-footed hunters. In the Rains they trotted by day through the dripping forest, the water running off their steaming hides, and surprised the little antelopes shivering in their sodden lairs.

The years sped by. Kutta and Jungly were full-grown dogs, to the fore in the chase and in council, and, as always, enemies, though they never fought now, for Jungly had quarrelled once too often. They had disagreed about a female of the tribe, and jealousy had given to the good-natured dog the ferocity that had been lacking in him. His rival was very near death that time, and the lesson had been such that for the future he contented himself with hating the other from a safe distance, sometimes snarling at him, but always careful not to provoke him to battle again. The bully was effectually cowed, and the two ran with the tribe in apparent peace.

The pack altered naturally with the years. Old dogs dropped out, dead of age or disease or, worst of all, of starvation when they grew too decrepit to hunt with the rest. Their ending was tragic. Left behind when the horde passed on, they crawled under bushes or hid in long grass to die, trying to avoid the all-seeing eye of the solitary vulture soaring high above the world, a speck in the blue sky. In vain. The great bird swept down in wide circles on planing

wing, and its far-away fellows, invisible to other gaze in the distance, saw its action, and came flocking from all points of the compass. Then these loathsome watchers of the dying gathered on the ground about the expiring dog, hopping nearer when the vital flame burned low, fluttering back a pace or two when, with a final desperate effort, the wretched brute dragged itself up on its paralysed hindquarters to snarl defiance at them. Then at the last, when the poor head fell back to earth, the foul harpies rushed in and hid the carcass in a heavy, squawking, quarrelling mass as they fleshed their crooked beaks.

Forgetful of their dead, the pack went forward always. The living must eat, so the hunters swept on their destroying way. Hated as they were, their enemies generally avoided them. Even tigers and panthers moved resentfully aside. The jungle has no time for quarrels on idle points of precedence. Only on the rare occasions when they interfered with each other's prey did one of the great striped or spotted cats dispute with any of the ravening dogs. But usually they gave them a wide berth.

To every rule there is an exception. In a shady ravine, where a stream trickled down towards the Tapti, lived a young and boastful tiger, filled with the pride of strength, who, in his few years of undisputed dominion of the stretch of forest around him, had grown to consider himself supreme lord of the jungle. In the Central Provinces there are no beasts more formidable than his race. The wild elephant and the rhinoceros, to which in the Terai the tiger must cede the right of way, are not found here; so this arrogant striped brute—Bagh\* he was called—looked on himself as autocrat of his little realm.

It chanced that hitherto the wild dogs, wide-ranging as they were, had never passed his way, and he knew nothing of their tribe. Great was his wrath, then, when one day as he drowsed by a shady pool in the ravine a score of yards from the half-eaten deer that he had killed as it drank there the night before, he was awakened by sounds strange to his ears, curious yelps and whimperings such as he had never heard; and, angrily opening his eyes, he saw nearly a dozen little animals—jackals of a new kind he thought them—tearing at his kill. The wind blew towards him, so that the daring poachers had no warning of his presence.

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\* *Bagh* means "tiger" in Hindustani.

He raised his head and stared incredulously through the leafy screen that hid him. This audacity was unbelievable. But it was a fact—these unknown beasts were eating his dinner. There was only one punishment that would fit the crime. They must die.

Silently the great brute rose from the ground, noiselessly the padded feet touched the earth and bore him in cover to within ten yards of the hungry dogs snatching at their windfall. The hideous barred mask of the yellow-and-black face stared at them through the greenery, the lips drawn back over the teeth in a silent snarl, the whiskers bristling in fury.

Then the big cat sprang. Like lightning his huge paws struck right and left, and two of the feasters dropped shrieking to earth with mangled bodies. Two more fell across them, and the rest fled yelping up the ravine's steep sides and away over the open. Bagh bounded after them, but checked on the shadeless brink when the blazing sunshine smote him, for a tiger hates the heat. Grumbling, he leaped down again into the cool shadows and stretched himself on guard by the carcass. Then the smell of fresh blood from one of the dying dogs tickled his nostrils, and with a lazy paw he dragged the twitching body to him and tore it asunder. He was devouring it with awakened appetite, crunching the slight bones with enjoyment, when the light breeze brought a chorus of unusual sounds to his ears, strange cries that reminded him of the small robbers that he had just punished. He lifted his reddened muzzle and listened in perplexity.

Suddenly from all sides the ravine was invaded by a host of the little beasts. They came with whimpering cries—wild dogs do not bark; that is an accomplishment that civilisation has taught their tame cousins. They lined the brink of the steep banks, they scrambled down the sides, they forced their way through the green undergrowth above and below the tiger. Their yelping cries held a strange menace in them, yet the tiger could not believe that these undersized animals could dare to threaten him. They were almost too insignificant to notice; but at last he stood erect and with bloodied jaws snarled viciously at them. The advance stopped, but the rash intruders did not scatter and bolt in terror as he expected.

Instead they bared their teeth and growled in reply, the hair on their necks bristling as they thrust forward their heads

and glared fiercely at him. Bagh looked at them in unfeigned surprise. Never before had any beast, save only his own kind, dared to withstand him. He slouched forward threateningly towards them. The mass in front of him drew back, but from behind a dog leaped out of cover at him and snapped at his haunches.

Only a swift spring round saved the tiger from the indignity of a wound in the rear, and with an angry roar he charged the offender. But his blind rush only brought him headlong into a thorny bush, his daring antagonist vanishing. And as he extricated himself, a sharp pain in his tail made him look quickly round just in time to see a young dog release his grip on it and bolt away.

Furious at the supreme insult, Bagh lost his head. He charged madly at every group of his despicable enemies in turn, never reaching any of them and always forced to swing round hastily to protect himself from an attack in rear. At last, furious and bewildered, he stood at bay in an open spot in the ravine and waited for his irritating foes to come on.

But the wild dogs were too cunning to risk an encounter with a yet unwearied and formidable antagonist. They circled around the tiger, making feigned rushes at him and always scattering safely out of his reach when he charged.

Such maddening tactics were too much for him. With shame and rage in his heart Bagh turned and walked sullenly down the ravine. It infuriated him to confess defeat and leave the field of battle to such enemies, but what else could he do? How fight such elusive foes? So, surrendering the carcass of the deer, he retreated.

But, to his surprise, they were not content with their victory. He did not realise that there was a debt of blood to pay, and that the spoils of war would not satisfy them. A few half-grown dogs rushed to the kill and tore strips of meat from it, but the rest followed him. Accompanied him, rather, for they ran ahead, they trotted beside him—but out of reach—they hung on his flanks. Every now and then one more daring than the rest sprang in and snapped at his haunches.

One—it was Kutta—loped along near his head, a few yards in advance and to one side, eyeing him now and again over his shoulder. The one-time puppy was to-day the leader of the pack, acknowledged as such by all except Jungly and a few sulky

rebels of his kidney. They alone ignored him and, although usually hunting with the rest, often brought his plans to naught by their disobedience, and so lost a prey. Now they were following behind, leaving the close pursuit of the tiger to him and his stalwarts.

But Kutta paid no heed to them. His one idea—the one instinct deep-rooted in the wild dog's brain—was revenge on the slayer of their companions. Had Bagh known the breed better he would have felt something more than annoyance and shame as he lumbered down the ravine, turning to snarl at the assailants in his rear, paying no attention to the silent dog so near his head that yet showed no desire to attack him. He did not know that Kutta never sprang at a quarry until he was sure, and when he locked with a foe it meant the death of one or other of them.

At last, hot, blown, and indignant, Bagh stopped. Instantly his pursuers did the same. They were now in a wide part of the ravine, here open and free from undergrowth and with perpendicular banks. The tiger walked with a growl over to one side and sat down with his back against the cliff. With a bored air the dogs squatted in a wide semicircle about him. The tiger sulkily eyed the ranks of the insulting animals with open mouths and hanging tongues. Surely such contemptible beasts could not believe that they had the power to harm him, the king of the jungle?

He could not credit it himself, and when he had recovered breath he burst out of the environing ring of foes and walked contemptuously on. But a sudden sharp pain in his flank made him swing round to find the blood starting from a long, raking tear made by the teeth of one of his puny assailants, which had dashed in and out in a flash and now stood complacently with reddened jaws just out of reach. Mad with pain and fury, Bagh rushed at him—in vain.

Then for the first time fear invaded the tiger's heart. These unseizable enemies were dangerous, after all. But if he could not fight them he could shake them off; so he bounded towards a breach in the steep bank and sprang up and out into the open. With a swift, rolling gait he set off over the plain, covered with long, dry grass dotted sparsely with thorny trees. The heat was intense, and the well-fed deer-slayer felt it acutely, but the need was urgent.

Then began an epic chase. Over the scorched ground the scared tiger sped. But



"They trotted beside him—but  
out of reach."

he could not shake off his tireless pursuers; and always by his head Kutta loped easily along. Other dogs sprang in and out again, sometimes searing the yellow-and-black hide with slashing bites that brought the red blood out; but the leader never checked in his stride, never altered his distance from the doomed quarry. His time to strike was not yet.

Now slowing down, now galloping his swiftest, Bagh went on through the hot afternoon hours. A winding line of tall trees met his troubled gaze, and he made for it, for he knew that it marked the river. Perhaps salvation lay there; in its depths he might rid himself of his relentless foes.

He reached it and waded out towards the centre over sheets of rock scarcely covered by the stream. His pursuers were at his heels. He stopped for a moment hock-deep

in a pool and buried his heated muzzle in the welcome water, then lapped it up in great gulps before he climbed on to a flat rock and looked around him. He made a fine picture as the setting sun shone on the deep orange and black of his hide, the great head with its ruff of white fur, the massive limbs, the powerful and bulky body a sculptor's model of strength. And all around him were grouped the wild dogs, drinking or lying down with lolling tongues on the wet sheet-rock, their eyes fixed on him with



"Every now and then  
one more daring than  
the rest sprang in and  
snapped at his haunches."

WARWICK  
REYNOLDS

a steady, expressionless gaze that terrified the tiger more than the most ferocious glare.

He went on and plunged into deep water. But his pursuers sprang in, too, and swam steadily across; so that, when cooled and dripping he climbed out of the water and up the steep bank, they were with him still, behind, beside, around.

He broke into a lurching gallop. Through the evening shadows the chase continued. Bagh faltered now and then and tried to stop, but always his foes closed in and he hurried on again. Over the level, down into deep nullahs and up again, through scrub and across black stretches of outcropping sheet-rock, the hunted and the hateful hunters kept on.

The moon came up and lighted them on their way. At length, exhausted with fatigue and want of sleep, Bagh stopped at the base of a rocky hill, his tail against a high boulder that protected his back. The dogs lay panting around him. He snatched what rest he could, never daring to sleep; for if his head nodded, some fierce little brute would dash in at him. He had his revenge, for he caught two of them, careless youngsters that misjudged their leap, and broken-backed they howled their swan-song.

The pack could sleep in turn, but he dared not. At dawn he went on and the canine Furies went with him. He drove blindly ahead across all sorts of country, and the sun rose and scorched him as he ran. And at the hottest hour of the day, and mad with thirst, he blundered into the hellish track of a forest fire, where the blasted tree-trunks stood up white and dead from the ground, which was inches deep in ashes that rose up before the hot wind in choking clouds filling mouth, nostrils, throat, lungs.

It was the end. Bagh could do no more. Coughing, smothering, he stopped, staggered on again blindly, his strength gone, stumbled and nearly fell.

A fierce young dog sprang at his right hindleg and with razor-like teeth shore through tendon and sinew, and a companion gripped the left and bit through flesh and muscle deep into the bone. The great yellow brute, hamstrung, blundered almost on to his skull.

And then Kutta struck. His chance had come. Leaping into the tiger's face, he gripped him by the nose like a bulldog, dragging the head down and rendering him powerless. At once a score of dogs fastened on their prey, clenching their iron jaws on the powerful limbs, sinking their teeth into the heaving sides, the massive shoulders, seeking the throat through the baffling ruff of thick hair. And one sprang in underneath

and gave the death-stroke, ripping the stomach open.

Bagh lurched forward on his head, sank to earth, and a wave of snapping dogs covered him. In agony he flung up his great skull, striving to shake Kutta off. But the staunch little animal, tossed violently about, never relaxed his grip. Down to earth came the proud head, the black-and-yellow face more horrible now in its grin of mortal agony.

A fresh rush of dogs closed in on him, the laggards of the chase, and foremost among them was Jungly. He aimed for the head; but as he sprang he caught a glimpse of the unprotected throat of Kutta, whose jaws were still clenched on the tiger's nose.

Even in that death-struggle the old hate flamed up afresh. Clan loyalty was forgotten in the chance to sate private vengeance by a foul blow; and, changing direction in mid-air, he leapt at his enemy's exposed neck. Already he felt the sweet savour of Kutta's spouting life-blood filling his mouth.

But at that very instant the dying tiger flung up his head again, so that the traitor's teeth met only in the leader's shoulder. And with a last effort, his life draining out through a hundred wounds, Bagh struck savagely at the staunch dog gripping his muzzle; but the heavy paw fell instead on the disloyal cur that had thrust in between them, and with a broken spine Jungly fell writhing to the ground, the unwilling saviour of his lifelong foe. Then as the tiger collapsed under the weight of the mass of his slayers and sobbed out his last breath, while their teeth tore his flesh away in huge gobbets, Kutta unclenched his jaws and staggered aside, bleeding, breathless, but triumphant. Then he saw the mangled body of his enemy, who glared at him with hate in the fast-glazing eyes, snarled a last feeble defiance and lay still in death.

And the survivor limped away to lick his wounds.





“But there's one thing you don't know, and that is what the hunger for happiness is when you have starved for it for years.”

# ADJUSTMENTS

By E. F. BENSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

FLORENCE MEDLICOTT closed her eyes for a few moments' rest and relaxation when finally her nephew, with whom she had dined and spent a solitary evening, went upstairs, not, as he was careful to explain to her, to go to bed, but to get an hour's quiet reading before doing so. He did not usually, he expounded, occupy his brain with serious thought immediately before retiring, but he had positively done nothing all day except amuse himself. It made her feel tired to think of that, for to her knowledge he had spent a couple of hours at the British Museum in the morning, had attended a lecture at the French Institute that afternoon, and had endeavoured to make her grasp the more elementary principles of

Relativity since dinner. Seymour was only nineteen, but he made her feel ninety, and how her sister Isabel could possibly be his mother seemed to Florence one of Nature's profoundest enigmas.

Hardly less difficult to explain was how he could possibly be the son of his late and little-lamented father; but certainly the less he was like his father the better, and she was content to accept that without any demur. Seymour was only staying with her for a few days, for he had just arrived from a six months' sojourn in France, where he had been perfecting himself in Parisian speech, and he was shortly starting for Weimar with parallel intentions. Florence felt, somehow, that he would soon be speaking German quite beautifully.

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She saw with amazement that the hour was still only half-past ten, and in order to while away the time before her sister's return from her dinner and theatre, she pulled a card table towards her and began occupying herself with some vague sort of Patience. She did not usually indulge herself with so futile a pastime, except when she felt unwell, but to-night she wished to distract her mind from the thought of the talk which was soon due. She played it, in fact, with the intention of people in the waiting-room of a doctor's house, who turn over the pages of ancient picture magazines as they wait for the step outside and the opening of the door which will summon them to their interview. But even as that simile occurred to her, she realised that it must not be too strictly applied, for it was she, correctly speaking, who was soon to occupy the physician's rôle, and it was the step of the consultant for which she waited. And the consultant was likely, so she guessed, to be rather obstinate; she would probably find the advice that was ready for her highly distasteful. She might, indeed, entirely refuse to take it. But Florence had made up her mind that no other treatment could possibly be successful.

She sat near the window in the front room on the ground floor, bending her shrewd, rather heavily-lined face over the cards, and making quick, decided dispositions of them. The night was hot, the sashes behind the drawn blinds were open, and a medley of itinerant noises came drifting in. There was the clacking of heels on the pavement outside, disjected fragments of laughter and conversation, the warning hoots of motors at the corner of the square and the faint cracklings of their studded wheels on the roadway. A few doors away a dance was going on, and sometimes she thought wheels had stopped at her door, and expected the next moment to hear the rattle of a latchkey, and at that she would immure herself in her foolish Patience again, for she wanted Isabel to think that she just casually happened to be sitting up for her. That would serve the purpose of the few introductory remarks about the weather and whatever with which the physician prefaced business. At last a motor stopped precisely outside, and she heard two voices. Isabel's was unmistakable, and it was with certainty that she conjectured the other. The two had plenty to say—laughter seemed to indicate that it was of an amusing nature—and then came the rattle of the latchkey,

an audible "Good night," and the closing of the front door.

She looked up as the radiant arrival entered, with laughter still hovering round her mouth and lurking in her dark eyes.

"Alone?" she said. "Seymour gone to bed?"

"Yes, a few minutes ago," said Florence. "Relativity, most interesting."

Isabel Avesham's eyebrows raised themselves in a query as she saw her sister's occupation, and she advanced across the room with a quickened movement. She walked with a boyish ease and litheness, as if with simmering energy in reserve.

"Patience?" she said. "Darling, you're not ill, are you?"

Florence paused, considering apparently the destination of the card in her hand. She wedged in, so to speak, the thin end of the business.

"Not to my knowledge," she said. "Ah, there's a space for it! Really, I began to play Patience because I thought it would be useful to see what it feels like to behave as if one was old. Before many years are up I shall be playing Patience every evening, I suppose, just because it's after dinner and not yet bedtime. I think I shall like being old—it will be very tranquil."

These carefully-chosen remarks served their purpose: they faintly suggested the sort of thing that was coming. There was no need, indeed, for any preliminary "Won't you sit down?" on Florence's part, for Isabel by her reply showed she had sat down.

"I wonder if it will be tranquil," she said. "I don't think I shall find it tranquillising to be tranquil. I should be anxious and alarmed if I found myself getting tranquil. And please don't practise getting old any more, Florrie. It's a dismal occupation."

Florence swept the cards together. "I entirely agree with you," she said. "Tell me about your evening. Tell me about your play."

Isabel laughed. "It was the simpler sort," she said. "Somebody in pyjamas kept going to bed and getting up again."

"How marvellous! So like life," said Florence.

"I never thought of that. There were people under his bed, and sitting on his bed, and coming in most unexpectedly and telephoning. But we roared with laughter."

"I don't even know who 'we' are," said

Lady Medlicott. "I only found your note when I came in, saying you were going to the play and would be out for dinner."

Isabel settled herself in a low chair with a cigarette. "My dear, what a liar you are! she observed. "You know perfectly well who 'we' were. Aren't you a liar?"

"I am," said Florence. "I guessed quite easily with whom you were going, and who it was who saw you home and chatted on the doorstep. Anyone else?"

"No, just Tom Langham and I."

They had pushed off into mid-stream by now, but it was with the intonation of a new idea that Florence spoke.

"Inclined for a little talk?" she asked.

Isabel gave a chuckle of laughter. "That means that you are," she said. "To find you playing Patience was evidence enough. You weren't practising for old age, darling; you were waiting for me to come in and corner me. I know your diplomatic methods. Well, I'm cornered: you begin."

Florence discarded her diplomacy and was singularly direct. "I want dreadfully to know what you mean to do about Tom Langham," she said.

"I don't in the least mind telling you. When he asks me to marry him I shall do so."

"And if he doesn't?" asked Florence.

Isabel's brilliant gaze circled round the room in a hovering flight before it settled on her sister again. "I suppose in that case I shall not do so," she said. "But I don't reckon with that. He will ask me to marry him."

"And are you in love with him?"

Isabel's eyes seemed to dance on her sister's like specks of sunlight on dark water. "I'm not quite certain," she said. "Now, don't interrupt me with your quickness and say that that means that I am not. I'm very near it, anyhow: a single turn of the screw may do it. We're the greatest friends. I find him perfectly charming, he's good-looking and he's young."

Florence felt the pitilessness of her questioning, but she would not have been pitiless if she had cared less. "And he?" she asked. "Is he in love with you?"

"My dear, what a catechism!" Isabel said. "He's there or thereabouts. He's fascinated by me, he thinks me marvellous. He's on the point of being in love with me. How cold-blooded it sounds when I put it into words, and that's a wrong impression to give you."

Florence got up and regarded her own

elderly shrewdness in the glass above the mantelpiece. She wanted, somehow, to remind herself of that by way of a tonic to her relentlessness.

"But he hasn't proposed to you yet," she said, "and I'll tell you why that is. He is wanting to adjust himself to the situation, to look it in the face. He finds you adorable, darling, and I'm sure I don't wonder, but he has to face the fact that he's only twenty-five years old—I know that because I looked him out just now in the Snobs' Bible—and you're forty. That sounds absurd, but it's a fact, and you may be sure that his mother has told him. He's considering it, that's what he's doing. He's wondering whether in the years to come it won't terribly disagree with him if he swallows it."

Isabel's brightness had a little faded from her face, and she rose and stood by her sister, also looking into the glass. It would have been almost as easy to imagine that their relationship was that of mother and daughter as to realise their sisterhood. Though there was scarcely ten years between them, age had set its stamp on the one face as surely as youth still blossomed on the other.

"That doesn't concern me," she said; "it's his business."

Florence shook her head. "It will be the business of both of you if you marry him," she said, "though I grant you that if you were in love with him, nothing would seem to concern you except that fact."

The brightness kindled on Isabel's face again. "Perhaps, then, I am in love with him," she said.

"That would account for your letting sense and prudence go hang, for you would be blind to everything else but that. But you aren't quite blind to everything else: you have a quantity of admirable reasons ready to be produced for my benefit as to why you should marry him. If you were really in love with him, you would merely laugh in my face or yawn in it. To be in love is excuse enough for any folly."

She paused a moment.

"I must justify that word," she said. "It isn't that I call you a fool, for fools never commit follies. Fools only go maundering along, and the follies, so to speak, commit themselves. It is dear, splendid women who commit follies, and you're on the brink of an immense one. You're forty, and he's twenty-five, so that you'll be fifty—nearly as old as I, and

manner of wife is a crone of fifty to a young man of thirty-five? Which of you would be the more miserable, you with your wrinkles or he with his vigour? I grant you all the splendours of your youth now—I allow that no one in his senses would think you over thirty—but the years take their revenges. They will sit round you, ever so many of them, and make mock of you, each of them more hideous than the last.”

Isabel's face remained unclouded under the pelting of these dismal prophecies. “My dear, what a croaking noise!” she observed. “Fancy looking ten years ahead! Who cares about what happens ten years from now? Years last an enormous time: one's horizon doesn't contain more than one or two.”

“They come up quickly,” said Florence.

He looked at her with kindly solicitude. ‘I'm so sorry,’ he said. ‘It—it is treacherous weather. But I won't wait any longer now.’”

“I don't agree. Each one stays so long—at least, mine have, and it's mine we're talking about.”

She turned away, and now the cloud came over her face.

“For nearly twenty years of my life,”

look carefully at me in the glass there—when he is thirty-five. Oh, Isabel, what



she said, "each year has been a century. The same years have made you peaceably and gradually old, but in spite of all their battering they've left me young. I refused to submit, I wouldn't give in, and do you suppose that I'm going to give in now when happiness has dawned on me? You've had your life, Florence, you can look back on it, and stroke it and make it purr to you——"

"My dear, I didn't mean——" began Florence.

Isabel interrupted her. "But you should have meant," she said, "for it

all concerns my decision. Supposing you had been tied to a brute of a husband for eighteen years, and had stood up to your misery and had kept your youth in spite



\* "Oh, I should have liked it," she said, "but—but I'm afraid my sister is right, Mr. Langham. Another day, perhaps."

of it, wouldn't you make the most of it when the struggle was over? What was the use of struggling otherwise? And wouldn't you feel that life owed you something? And when life, even late, came towards you with its hands full of gifts and wonderful things, would you turn your back on them and say 'It's too late'? You told me I had plenty of admirable reasons to give you, and there they are for you. You inferred from that that I was not in love, and perhaps that's true. But oh, my dear, he's adorable! I can't argue, and I don't want to. You always had the brains of the family."

She took a turn up and down the room.

"To console you for having utterly failed to affect me," she said, "I'll tell you that you said one very shrewd thing. You suggested something that hadn't occurred to me before, and I think you must be right about it. For the last two days I've wondered sometimes why Tom didn't propose to me, and perhaps you've guessed the reason. He's getting used to the idea of marrying a woman who is—well, just a shade his senior. I don't like the notion: it rather revolts me."

"I'm delighted to hear it," said Florence.

"How very disagreeable of you! But don't take any comfort to yourself because of that, for I shall swallow it. In fact, I shall have a quiet few days in which to cut it up small and eat it in pieces, for Tom is going into the country to-morrow, and won't be back till the end of the week. And now I think 'bed,' don't you? I give you a kiss to show I forgive you for all the disagreeable things you've said, and another because you're a darling."

Florence lifted her face towards the beautiful bent head. "My dear, I feel a brute," she said, "but that's quite an illusion, because I'm anything but that. I only desire your happiness, but I do desire it with my head as well as my heart."

"As if I don't know that! But there's one thing you don't know, and that is what the hunger for happiness is when you've starved for it for years."

\* \* \* \* \*

Strong attraction is not, as Isabel began to find during the first two days of Tom Langham's absence, static in quality: it does not, that is to say, continue to exercise a stable uniform force. Nor is it of the nature of some strain or pull which, if powerless to overcome a certain inertia, remains for ever incapable of moving it.

Its action is rather that of some chemical process which spiritually enkindles until, unless the ash of habit or disillusionment quenches it, a flame burns. Some such process was at work in her, and perhaps the very fact that the young man was away from her furthered the working of it, and she missed him with an acuteness that surprised her. Not at first did she realise what was stirring and fermenting within her, and she had moments of dismay when she pondered on Florence's odious surmise that he was adjusting himself, looking the future in the face. The thought of that had been repugnant to her even while she said it did not concern her; now it began to concern her very intimately, and the closer it came to her, the more icy was its touch. She shuddered at it, and snatched at the cold fingers that clutched her to unloose their hold. There were other thoughts, too—thoughts that she discovered creeping about her mind, like folk who grope through some encompassing fog—these also must be wrestled with and mastered. They had peering eyes and stealthy glances, and as she caught them and scrutinised them, she knew that she wondered whether she was as confident as she had said about his devotion. It was scarcely likely his affections were now engaged for the first time. How easily it might be that before he offered himself to her he was now making some last appeal to a girl who had refused him! The notion had no foundation in knowledge, but jealousy needs neither clay nor straw for the making of its bricks. It builds with monstrous substantiality out of nothing at all. The fact that she had not heard from him was material enough to rear such an edifice; if she had, she could have found a quarry in whatever he wrote.

But as the change in her progressed, these imaginings withered on their sapless stalks, and some sense of starvation at his absence came overwhelmingly upon her. It was not such starvation as that of which she had spoken to Florence, starvation bitter and aching, but a starvation sweet and exquisite, which feeds magically on the manna of thought and, while it stays its craving thus, securely waits for the true banquet to be spread.

The flame burst out. She was in love with him, and knew that she was in love with him. And Florence, shrewd, wise Florence, had said that this alone would justify her in letting prudence and reason go hang, and with the blindness of love to guide her,

would account for her committing the immeasurable folly of marrying a man fifteen years her junior. Isabel, with the illumination bright about her, could have laughed at the amazing ignorance of these wise folk. What was Florence thinking of?

\* \* \* \* \*

It was late. An hour ago her sister had gone up to bed, but the clear shining in Isabel's heart made some insistent immediate call to her; it clamoured for the assertion of its own superb renunciation. Florence must know, not to-morrow, but to-night, how false had been her shrewdness. That clever, plausible conclusion of hers must be stamped on. Isabel found herself thinking of it as some baleful insect that could no more be permitted to live than those jealousies which had groped about her own uncomprehending brain.

She went along the passage to her sister's room and entered. Florence was already in bed, and the room in dimness with just a circle of light from the shaded lamp illuminating the book she read.

"Isabel!" she said. "What is it, my dear? Nothing wrong?"

Isabel sat down on the side of her bed. "No. Something right," she said. "I couldn't wait; I had to come to tell you now."

Something in her voice, some exultant vibration, caused her sister to tilt back the shade of her lamp and throw its illumination on to Isabel's face. Her voice had been a true interpreter: that exultation was radiant in her eyes and mouth.

"But what has happened?" she asked again.

Isabel gave a long sigh. "Everything has happened," she said.

She put up her hand and turned the glare of the light away from her.

"My dear, when we talked the other night," she said, "we neither of us understood. We were at cross-purposes. You told me that my being in love with Tom would justify my marrying him. I believed that I was justified in marrying him without that. But I love him—that is clear to me now—and what you thought would justify me is just that which makes my marriage impossible. Don't you see now that it must be so? I can see nothing else but that."

There was a long silence. Isabel's hand sought and clasped her sister's and held it tight.

"I've got to go through dark places, I expect," she said, "but I carry my lamp with me. It won't go out: nothing will quench it, but the dark will be all round me on every side——"

She broke off again.

"I must be wise, too," she said. "If Tom asked me to marry him, I know I should not be able to refuse him. I couldn't do it. I'm flesh and blood, among other things. So he mustn't propose to me. If I don't prevent him, he will. Very likely you are right about his adjusting himself, but when he comes back, in a day or two now, he will have adjusted himself. So I must prevent that. Oh, my dear, the years! The brutal things——"

Her breath caught in her throat for a moment.

"No, I'm not going to snivel," she said. "I'm going to carry my heart high with courage. It's of him that I must think. I must do all that has to be done with gaiety and lightness. A stony way is intolerable if you think about the stones. All that matters is where the way takes you, and what the way is. It's the royal road——"

She stopped abruptly.

"Good night, you best of Florries," she said. "I had to come and tell you. I can't discuss with you either to-night or, indeed, ever, I think. There's nothing to be said. If you used all the words in the dictionary ten times over, you wouldn't be able to say anything about it worth mentioning."

\* \* \* \* \*

Three mornings later the telephone conveyed an inquiry from Tom Langham as to whether Mrs. Avesham would be at home at half-past eleven that day, and in answer to her welcoming response he appeared.

Isabel was not alone: a short young man with spectacles was with her. He was in the middle apparently of some voluble explanation, directing her attention with his forefinger to a chart that was spread on a table beside her low chair.

"Most interesting," she was saying as Tom entered. "Yes, dear, I think I understand, but you must say it again. Ah, Mr. Langham! How nice to see you! Just back from the country?"

She grasped the arms of her chair and, with a wince, hoisted herself on to her feet.

"You see me a perfect cripple," she said. "Nothing the matter, but I suppose when one gets to my age one must have something, and I have rheumatics. Ah, I forgot

you don't know my son Seymour. Seymour, this is Mr. Langham."

She moved stiffly across to the fireplace and rang the bell twice.

"Seymour was just telling me the most wonderful things about the attraction of the sun on rays of light," she said. "Dreadfully difficult to understand, but most interesting, all the same. I long to know Mr. Einstein. But tell me what you've been doing. Wasn't the country delicious? I wonder how you tore yourself away to come back to this swelter of town."

Florence Medlicott entered. ("Twice" had been the preconcerted signal.) In this bright, reverberating glare that came in from the pavement outside through the unshaded windows, she looked amazingly wizened and old.

"You do know my sister, don't you?" said Isabel. "You met the other night, surely? Yes, I thought so."

Tom Langham shook hands with her. He did remember her, but this was a new impression. Then he turned to Isabel.

"I just dropped in," he said, "to see if by good luck you were free this afternoon, and would care to drive down with me to Ranelagh. There's some polo——"

Florence interrupted. "Dear Isabel," she said, "I must put my foot down about that. You would be awfully unwise to stand about, and perhaps get wet."

Isabel hastened to confirm this. "Oh, I should have liked it," she said, "but—but I'm afraid my sister is right, Mr. Langham. Another day, perhaps."

He looked at her with kindly solicitude. "I'm so sorry," he said. "It—it is treacherous weather. But I won't wait any longer now. I dropped in just to see whether you were disengaged and felt inclined. I hope you'll soon be better."

There was a moment's silence after he had gone out. Isabel's eyes met her sister's for one second.

"Now, Seymour," she said, "tell me more about that wonderful experiment. They adjusted the telescope so that when the eclipse came on. . ."



## THE STORMS AND THE HAVENS.

By SIR WILLIAM WATSON.

**Y**OUR eyes were pining southward, and you said, "The lands are yonder  
That can woo me with sweet fierceness o'er the interloping sea."  
But I answered, "Oh, I care not whether south or north we wander,  
For the world is lovely everywhere if roam'd through with thee."

We lingered by the waters as they rose and subsided;  
We watched the plummy children of the foam and the spray;  
We saw the massing clouds that in a moody silence glided;  
We heard the tempest peal, amid the ruins of the day.

And the Ocean to this land of ours a wild kiss was throwing,  
From the lips that ever babble of the Far and Unknown;  
And the dream-tides were lapping, and the dream-winds blowing,  
In the harbours that we voyage to with dream-sails alone.

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# THE PLUMBER'S WIFE

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

OF course there was but one person in Redcliff who felt any doubt about Bob English. All the rest of us knew very well he was our first and leading chap in his trade. A most skilful man, and though two other plumbers we also had, both owned that Bob was deeper skilled in the mysteries of the craft than either of 'em; and when they needed attention at Greenslade Court, or the vicarage, or anywhere else of importance, 'twas for English they sent and not for Bill Hannaford, nor yet Arthur Brown.

But, as it happens so often, a man that's a hero to his fellow-man be something a good bit less in his wife's eyes, and Rose English somehow never could grasp her husband's greatness. She was a house-proud woman without a doubt, and her little home you might have called an object-lesson to every young wife. From the smoke-cowl on the bedroom chimney to the brass taps in her wash-house, Mrs. English had her house a proper masterpiece; and yet, when any little job wanted doing, she was always afraid of her life if Bob took it on, and would feel a lot more happy and hopeful about it when he was busy elsewhere. Then she'd slip over for Bill Hannaford, or even Arthur Brown.

Of course her view of Robert didn't stop at distrust of his workmanship. That, as he himself admitted behind the scenes to his mother, old Deborah English, was of no consequence whatever. But the deep-rooted distrust what Rose felt for him went into everything, and she never was able to believe that her own man could be quite up to the mark from any point of view. You couldn't say she didn't like him; but there weren't none of that fine belief in a husband you see in most young wives. She under-valued him and failed to see that Bob was well up to the average of working men in Redcliff. No doubt in a measure he was to blame, because he happened to be a very modest chap himself and never boasted his

good parts, or talked big, or fancied himself either as a plumber or as a man. And Rose, not seeing this was a virtue in him, and not blessed with the mother-wit to know that he was a long sight more worthy and wise than he made out, took him at his own value—a foolish thing to do with man or woman nine times out of ten; for how many of us know how bad, or good, we are ourselves, let alone our neighbours?

They'd been married five years, I dare say, had two very nice little children, and all went well to the eye; but Mrs. English, the elder, understood that Bob were still held a lot too cheap, and she smarted at it, though he'd got used to the slighting and even laughed about it sometimes.

He'd go off to his mother of an evening now and again, and smoke a pipe with her and tell her the news; and she was a widow and he was her only one, and she thought a powerful lot of him.

He dropped in one night with a good tale and let his mother hear it. Her first question was always the same, for she took a sleepless interest in her daughter-in-law, of course.

"And how's Rose?" she began as usual; and then Bob told her how his little boy, Jack, had broke a window, and how he'd put it in, being every bit as good at such a job as he was plumber.

"She mistrusts it a lot, however," said Bob. "She says it don't look to her quite like the other windows. I expect she'll pop round to the glazier when my back's turned and ask him to come and do it again for her peace of mind."

"A maddening woman, and I wish you'd put your foot down. There'll be no order till you do. You ought to strike a hard blow, Bob, for your own salvation. And if you don't, you'll look back when I'm gone and remember I was right, but too late then."

Robert laughed, though his mother did not.

"No laughing matter, as you'll find. She



thinks more of the gimcracks on her parlour mantelshelf than what she do of you."

"Yes, faith; and sometimes I know she feels terrible doubtful about my share in the childer!"

"Hateful toad! But she may thank her God you know a joke when you see it and can mark the funny side. If you was a solemn owl like her, you'd have knocked her head in afore now; but you can't laugh for ever. 'Tis time she had a proper eye-opener, and it's your duty, now or never, to give her one. The next thing will be your boy and girl are turned away from you and taught you ain't a good companion for 'em! And don't you let her think she's going to keep Jack and Ivy out of my house, because she is not. I'll have them both here when I please and so often as I please. They'll get the truth about their father from me if they don't from her."

Bob he laughed again, and old Mrs. English went on.

"You strike, or the time will soon come when it's too late to strike. They house-proud women have all got one weak spot, if no more; and if nought else offers, you let go and smite her through her house. Even though it was to cost you a bit of money, a five-pound note would be well spent if it brought you back your self-respect and peace of mind and shook sense into her."

They chattered on, and Bob smoked his pipe and drank a dish of tea with the old woman; and then he went home. And not a week later chance so fell out that the very thing his mother advised for him to do fell within the plumber's grasp. Not once in a hundred times would he have rose to it; but it happened, on this particular fatal day, that Rose English had galled him above a bit and said a few words that stuck in Bob's brain like a sharp arrow and hurt him. She was a handsome girl, with a fine upright shape, fearless blue eyes, red lips and a great mane of tow-coloured hair. She took life awful serious, no doubt, and had more opinions than ideas, as young women mostly have nowadays—along of education perhaps. But for cleanliness and order and thrift and punctuality and a love of having everything just so, there wasn't her match in Redcliff. Her voice was a thought harsh, and she used it a good deal; but the people admired her a lot, though she hadn't any close friends. She didn't want 'em, owing to her being too busy at home. A servant she kept—a little maid

by the name of Mabel—to look after the children; and for the rest she was a great gardener, but wouldn't allow no cats nor yet dogs, holding all dumb creatures to be more trouble than they are worth.

Well, she stabbed Bob to the bone, and it was on little Jack's fifth birthday that she did so. He'd bought his youngster a box of toy tools for a present, and gave him a bit of lead and a few odds and ends to play with, thinking perhaps that his own instincts would come out in Jacky. Because the babe was a clever, sturdy little fellow and already wishful to be a plumber.

But when Rose saw the tools, she lifted her voice against 'em for two reasons.

"A fool's trick," she said. "He'll only go cutting and messing about with 'em and doing damage; and, be that as it will, I don't want his mind turned to that sort of thing."

"Why for not?" asked Bob. "He wants to be a plumber."

"And is any child of mine going to be a plumber, d'you think?" she asks. "I've got higher ideas for him, if you haven't."

"That's interesting," answered Bob. "Because, as you came to me without a penny, and all our prosperity and success be built on plumbing, I'm surprised you think so ill of it. And I'll tell you another thing, my dear," he says, "it's a bit strange to me you could marry into a trade as you don't think good enough for your offspring."

"Not a bit strange," she said. "I married you because I loved you, Bob; not because you was a plumber, but in spite of it. My love rose above your business; but it happens that my son have intellects a good bit out of the common, and I'm wishful to see him in a higher walk of life than drains and such-like."

She'd always got her answer, you see. And she was never angry, nor spiteful. She just went her remorseless way like a steam-roller, and if Bob sulked, she didn't take no notice; and if he laughed and was in a good humour, it didn't leave no mark on her. Never puffed up except over her house and children, and never cast down neither. Robert didn't answer her again. He'd long learned it weren't no use answering, because she had a trick to spar quiet and pleasant till he made a false move and said something that gave her a chance, and then she'd get in with a bit of her cruel commonsense that left Bob down and out.

So he didn't answer, but he sulked and

licked his wounds, and thought it a very sad thing that he mustn't hope for a son to follow in his steps.

And then came the crash, and a most extraordinary and amazing affair it was, showing that human nature's never without its surprises. Rose had gone up to Exbridge, the market town for Redcliff. It was a thing she did once a month, to see her parents, who kept a haberdasher's there, and to do a bit of shopping and so on. And Bob, coming home from his work the same evening, found himself faced with a very fine catastrophe.

The nursery-maid met him with a face full of trouble, and she thanked her God he was home, and explained what had happened.

"Oh, please, Mr. English, 'tis Jack," she said. "I was up over putting Ivy to bed, and he was in the wash-house with his tools, what you gave him, and he's hammered a hole in the waterpipe under the sink, and the water be flowing like a river, and who knows what missis will say about it when she comes home?"

She spoke truth, and when Bob went in the place, there was Jack, wet to his skin and full of business, trying to mend the leak and making it worse every minute. He was that excited you wouldn't believe, and the water was gathering way and making pretty good progress. Of course, Master Jack had found 'twas easier to knock a hole in a pipe than stop it after; and Bob called him off and took a view of the disaster, and saw pretty much what it meant to his ground floor if he didn't get to work instanter. But he found himself amazing calm and collected, and in no hurry whatever.

Mabel and the child waited for him to get on it, but not a finger he moved. He was figuring out in his mind how things stood. The water would go down the passage—in fact, it had started to do so—and it would then flow into the kitchen and proceed to the parlour. A nice steady current was running over the hall linoleum by now, and once in the parlour it would be faced with an Axminster carpet, the joy of Rose's heart. It would work over this to the fireplace, past the sofa and the rest of the upholstered suite of Bob's best furniture.

He looked at his watch. His wife wouldn't be home for two hours, so he reckoned that would give the flood time to make its mark. A saying of his mother's rang in his head: "Smite her through her house!" The plumber in him, of course, itched to le

at the leak and throttle it, as he could have done in half a minute; but the man in him stood out. He turned to Mabel with a steady voice:

"A very ill-convenient thing without a doubt," he said, "and 'tis a thousand pities that Mrs. English have gone to town to-day; but we can't do nothing without her, I'm afraid."

"Oh, my stars!" cried Mabel. "Can't you stop it, master, and you a professed plumber?"

"I could stop it," admitted Bob. "With three blows of a hammer I could stop it; but I mightn't stop it in the way to please Mrs. English. She's very particular about her house, as you know, and if I got to work, I might take a line she didn't agree with and do more harm than good in her eyes."

"Then shall I run for Mr. Hannaford, or Mr. Brown, while you mind Jack and Ivy?"

But Bob shook his head.

"A very clever thought, Mabel; but I'm not sure which of 'em Mrs. English might trust to come to the task; and if we sent for the wrong one, there would be a lot more to vex her. We must never vex Mrs. English, Mabel. She'll be home in two hours if she takes the usual train—and she's sure to do so, with her orderly mind—so you put Jacky into a hot bath and then to bed, and look after both childer, and let the water run and hope for the best, as I shall. Take no steps to do anything."

The poor girl stared and thought he was out of his mind, of course, as anybody else would; but, for once in a way, Bob knew his own mind wonderful well. He was going through with the job.

"Shall I hold some basins and slop-pails and towels to it?" asked Mabel; but he thought better not.

"Quite a good notion; only 'tis any odds we'd take the wrong basins and slop-pails, my dear. And then we should trouble Mrs. English still more. In fact," said Bob, "this is a case for her master cleverness, and we'll do well just to let everything bide and Nature take its course till we have the light of her countenance upon us once more. You put the childer to bed and feed 'em and keep upstairs, and I'll go round and have a drink at 'The Cat and Canary' and meet the Missis at the railway-station come presently, and break the sad news to her, and see what she decrees."

With that Bob prepared to leave his home to its fate, and the girl, in doubt wheth-

she was awake or dreaming, did his pleasure and went off upstairs with Jacky.

Bob just noticed that the flood was setting into the parlour very brisk and cheerful; then he managed to edge off a little stream to the front door also, so as it should greet Rose on her arrival; and after that he turned his back on the scene and strolled down the village to kill a bit of time at the public house.

And it was then that he examined his feelings, as he confessed to me long after. He felt a sort of dim discomfort inside him from the first, so he declared. He knew he was a bit of a coward at heart, and that what he'd done and left undone was on the cowardly side. For no decent man likes to hurt a woman really. But against that was the great and triumphant hope that, after all, he might consider himself in the hands of Providence, and that everything was falling out as it should, and that Rose would share the benefits in the long run. He felt that there was a good bit of irony in the situation, and, of course, the irony had been lost on the girl Mabel, because the inner meaning of it all was hid from her. But then he asked himself if his wife would see the irony. If she didn't, he reckoned to be in rather a trying position when she returned. Rose was pretty clever at not seeing what she didn't choose to see, and if she chose to miss the point of what he'd done, or, rather, left undone, then Bob guessed that this last state might, if possible, be a bit worse than his first. In fact, he felt anxious on this score by the time he got to 'The Cat and Canary,' and, to hearten himself, did a thing rather out of the common with him and took spirits instead of beer. Old Jarvis Jarrett, the publican, was behind his bar—a bald-headed, clean-shaved man, with a good heart and lots of sense.

Bob discoursed on general subjects and said that spring was in the air, and Jarvis agreed with him. Then something made the plumber turn to his own grievances, and he voiced 'em in a general way.

"Progress is built on faith, in my opinion," he said. "Faith gets a move on, and the man who knows he's trusted is a better man than him who knows he ain't."

"True," admitted Mr. Jarrett. "And even a chap as can't in wisdom be trusted may rise to better things and feel his conscience touched if he finds he is trusted. There's a spark of honour hid in every mother's son, Bob, or so I believe."

"For certain," declared the plumber;

"but suspicion and doubt and distrust—they keep progress back, and make men reckless, and hang up civilisation and breed strikes and lock-outs and trouble."

"Never a truer word," declared Jarvis. "You've only got to look at politics to see that distrust between us all lies at the root of our misery."

Bob had another whisky.

"You must create confidence between man and man," he said, "and between man and woman also; and between man and wife most of all."

"Certain sure; but blind trust ain't no good," explained Jarvis. "Why do you chaps come here for your drink? You come because experience has showed you that my beer and spirits be the best brew you'll get for your money; and you know that if I could give you still better, I would do so. As for women, they are more suspicious than us, because Nature have taught 'em so to be. 'Tis in their hearts not to trust us further than they can see us, along of bitter experience in the past; and it's up to us—man to woman—to convince 'em we are all we say we are. The beginning of a marriage is just laying down the foundations of trust on both sides; and the moment a female knows that her particular man be well worthy of her, then she comes out like the sun from behind a cloud and the weather sets fair."

Bob nodded. He was now got into a very amiable mood.

"All true," he said. "I'll take one more spot of whisky, Jarvis, and then I'll be on my way. To establish trust is a great thought, but a darned difficult deed apparently."

They put the world right between them for another half hour, and after that English filled his pipe again and strolled out into the twilight. He was now at peace with himself and the world, and the whisky made his future look very promising for the minute. He thought of how the deluge was going on at home, and laughed out loud. He talked to a few men he met, and bought a three-pound plaice off Joe Greggs, who'd just landed from his fishing-boat. He wrapped it in a newspaper which his pocket held, and thrust it in his breast for safety. At the station he passed the time of day with the station-master, who is a teetotaler, and the old man listened with a bit of surprise to Bob's unsteady voice.

Then came the train, and Rose English alighted with her parcels; and it astonished

her a lot more than she showed, to see her husband grinning on the platform.

"What the mischief be you doing here?" she asked, while he took her parcels and explained that both love and duty had brought him. But she didn't believe it. Lightning quick she was to scent anything out of the common at any time.

"Tell me what it is and don't waste no words," she said.

"Well," he began, "I went home to my tea as usual, to find trouble. I won't disguise it. There was trouble. But when serious things happen, as you know, you like to take the lead, and don't feel I'm——"

"Not the children?" she snapped out.

"No, but just one child. Jack——"

"Hurt himself—ill? Do tell me—don't keep twittering."

"I ain't twittering," answered Bob, "and he ain't ill. However, he's done a very vexatious and unusual thing, and my first thought was to whip him; but then I said, 'No,' I said, 'tis just original sin,' I said, 'and Rose would feel that having a plumber for a father might explain all. So she must decide what he's earned.'"

At these words Rose started as if a serpent had stung her.

"Robert," she said, "you're drunk."

"I wouldn't go so far as that," answered Bob, "but a drop I have had without a doubt. I was a lot worried about you and wanted support."

"What is it, then? Tell me, tell me, can't you?"

"What have happened is this, and I beg you'll take it in your usual large spirit," went on the plumber very mildly. "Jack, playing in his clever way, hammered a hole through the water-pipe under the sink, and of course the water came out. The scullery was drowned, and, as water will find its own level, the stream was soon into the passage and making for the parlour."

Rose stared round-eyed at the man.

"The parlour! Was you in time?"

"Plenty of time, and, under cheerfuller circumstances, I might have saved the Axminster, if no more. But, knowing your feeling about my house, I durstn't take any liberties. You mistrust me so shocking and hate even to hear me hammer home a nail. So I felt you'd be better pleased if some other and cleverer man took over the job."

"Did nothing—and you a plumber?"

"That's what surprised Mabel. But she didn't understand; you will. I did nothing at all. I'm a husband first and a plumber

afterwards; and well knowing your honest opinion of me, I said to Mabel, 'This is a case beyond our poor powers; we must wait for the Missis.'"

Robert was now enjoying himself, as he dared to confess to me after. He'd got in a fine reckless stage, and his conscience was dead for the time being, and he didn't care a brass button for his wife or anybody.

But, though the woman's anguish rose in her, yet still she hoped against hope, as they say.

"You fetched Hannaford, then? Say you got Hannaford," she implored him.

"Far from it," replied Bob. "After very near six years of married life I know my place in our home. There's two other plumbers, of course, and both within call; but what's my judgment worth? You can tell—none better. I wasn't going to run no risks in a fatal matter like this, only to hear, when you came home, I'd called in the wrong one. I've got my faults, but no man can say I'm reckless where you're concerned."

"Then the water's running yet?" said Rose, in a faint voice.

"Yes, it will be running. I told Mabel to put Jack and Ivy to bed and stop upstairs with 'em. Us don't want no complications. There was a promise that a stream would break off from the main flood and reach the front door when I left. It had got so far as the umbrella stand. 'Twill be down the steps and in the garden, I shouldn't wonder. But so much the less for the parlour. We must catch hope where we can."

The woman tottered, and no doubt her mind shook on its foundations. She was too overwhelmed to be angry, and for the minute she was probably thinking more of her Axminster than Bob's wits. He didn't say no more, except to mention his fish and fear they wouldn't be able to cook it that night. But then there came a last faint shadow of hope to Rose, and she told herself that such nightmare things don't happen, and that it was all a bit of Bob's fun.

"If this ain't true and you're pulling my leg, then you must be mad to do it, Robert English," she told him.

But he shook his head.

"I much wish we could explain it so easy as that," he answered. "I wish 'twas just an attack of madness, as you say. Don't you think it's any pleasure to me to tell you these tragical things. With all my many faults, I'm not out of my intellects, because, if I was a madman, I should do violent and

senseless deeds, and very likely want to be master in my own house—what's left of it—and a lot else you wouldn't hold with."

It was then, no doubt, that Rose began to understand the inner meaning of the situation. Like a blow the truth struck her, and, being as clever as they make 'em really, she quickly grasped the truth and what she was up against. She didn't say another word, and they walked a hundred yards at top speed afore Bob broke the silence once more.

"Here's Mr. Hannaford's," he said, as they passed a little cottage opening in the street. "He's quite a safe chap at stopping a leak, in my opinion, and unless you know anything against him, he might rise to it. I've worked with him more'n once, and he's often asked me for information in the higher branches. It will save half an hour, perhaps, if I fetch him along. However, if your judgment inclines to Brown——"

But by this time Rose had got her wits about her. Her woman's mind had grasped the whole dark plot so clear as day, and she felt for the minute that Bob was her master. But only for the minute, of course. So she set her cleverness to match his, and answered as meek as a worm.

"I don't want no Hannafords, nor yet Browns," she said. "I want you. And nobody shan't touch the house but you. 'Tis your house, and you'll make a better job of it than anybody else, because we all know there's no plumber like you this side of Exbridge."

She wondered at her own wisdom even while she spoke; but she didn't wonder so much as Bob. He couldn't believe his own ears and he grovelled instantly, and the pangs of remorse got hold upon him, him being a very remorseful man at all times in reality. While she already looked on beyond her surrender to the future, he swore to himself that he was a cowardly ruffian to have treated a good wife so shameful. Men often give way like that a thought too soon, and let the watchful, though beaten, enemy get the fruits of the battle after all—especially if it's a woman.

They came home, then, to find a brave rillet pouring out under the front door into the flower-bed, and the children shouting their heads off above stairs, because the poor little toads thought they was going to be drowned, and Mabel weren't sure but what they might be right. There was a few neighbours got together round about the front garden; but Bob and Rose didn't

stop to have no speech with them. They went in and shut the door upon their disasters, and she lit the lamp and bolted for the parlour, and he went to the sink, and in half a minute, of course, the flow was stopped. But a fearful scene had spread afore Rose in her parlour, and, as she always said, that night put ten years on her life. They worked good and hard and stuck to business till three in the morning, and the house was pretty well out of windows afore they sank to their rest.

And with morn the woman brought Bob a cup of tea to his bedside at half after six, and reported that a drying wind had done useful work on the carpet, which they'd hung over the clothes-line in their back yard.

"There's a week's hard work afore us with furniture polish and so on," said Rose; "but after that things did ought to be pretty much as they were."

A week later the man went to see his mother, and old Deborah English heard the story with great admiration and applause.

"It's run me into four pounds seven," said Bob. "She didn't ask, but I offered, and I don't grudge a farthing. She saw the point from the first. She saw it, I do believe, afore ever we'd got home from the station. Trust her—a clever creature and a wonderful wife at heart such as she is. I was afraid of my life she might miss the irony; but I needn't have feared. She caught it all right, and it went deep. And now 'tis Bob here, and Bob there and Bob everywhere. 'Tis Bob if a pin scratches the paint, or a finger clouds a bit of furniture. In fact, her eyes be opened to me as I never thought they would be in my most hopeful minutes."

"Don't let there come no backsliding, then," warned his mother. "Not on your side, nor yet on hers. Be watchful to get in first every time. With a woman like her, there's a pretty good chance she be hiding her heart and her real opinions, and keeping something up her sleeve unseen. She's the sort that hates to be bested. Mind, I don't say she's concealing nothing; but, from what you say, it's going on too much like a Sunday-school tale for the minute. So keep watchful."

"I've read her the lesson and she's took it," declared Bob; but old Mrs. English, as had been in the world a good many years more than him, still advised caution.

"Take care there ain't no smouldering," she said. "They will smoulder sometimes—they proud ones—long after you fondly

think they be extinguished. I always did myself, so I ought to know."

But Bob just left it at that and went on with the new order of things in faith, hope

him if things were still going on clever at home, he said they were.

"'Clever's' the word," declared Bob. "Me and Rose be so clever nowadays that



"They worked good and hard and stuck to business till three in the morning."

and charity. And what came of it may best be told in another talk as he had with his old mother six weeks later.

He came to tea, and when she asked

we've got properly self-supporting. I did ought to be proud in a way—in fact, I am proud—but everything have got two sides, and there's no doubt that Rose's sleepless

cleverness to see my cleverness be a bit of a tax on a man."

"What d'you mean by that?" asked old Mrs. English, her mind suspicious.

"I mean," said Bob, "that you may say my day's work don't begin till it's ended. I mean that when I come home after my usual business, I'm met with endless tasks, yet all so reasonable that I can't refuse one of 'em. Rose have got to trust me that amazing! Every mortal job that a pair of hands can do is mine. 'My life,' she says, 'what is there you can't do, Bob?' And she properly racks her wits to find what I can't do. And, being the man I am, of course I respond; and what's the result? I've darned well got to do everything. The house first from a scrap of paint on the parlour threshold to a loose tile or a stopped rain shoot; and then the garden also. There's always a job waiting in the garden—to keep out the neighbour's fowls, or lock in our own, or plant a row of seeds, or dig in a bit of sea-weed and fetch it first. Then there's pruning the trees and digging the potatoes or hilling 'em up, or a scarecrow over the raspberry canes, or something. Then, in my spare time—in *my spare time*, mark you—I've got to teach Jacky to read, and mind Ivy if Rose wants Mabel for a task; and she also likes for me to go out with her and the perambulator of a Saturday afternoon."

Old Deborah nodded.

"I see," she said. "I see. I knowed she was a smoulderer."

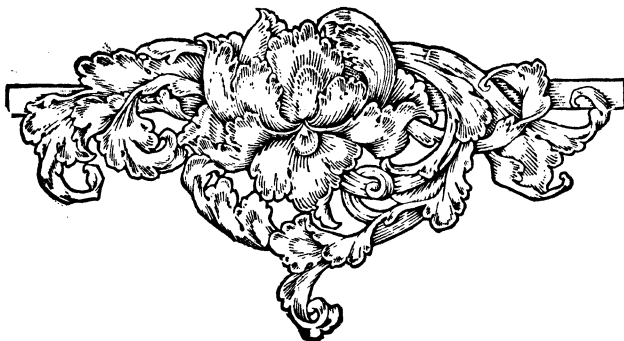
"I can do it, mind you," went on Bob. "I've surprised myself sometimes, for I've got a most wonderful trick to turn my hands to any task and do it right. She don't withhold praise. She says I'm a born wonder, though whether she really thinks so be hidden. She'll pat me on the back after one of my feats and say 'tis almost beyond

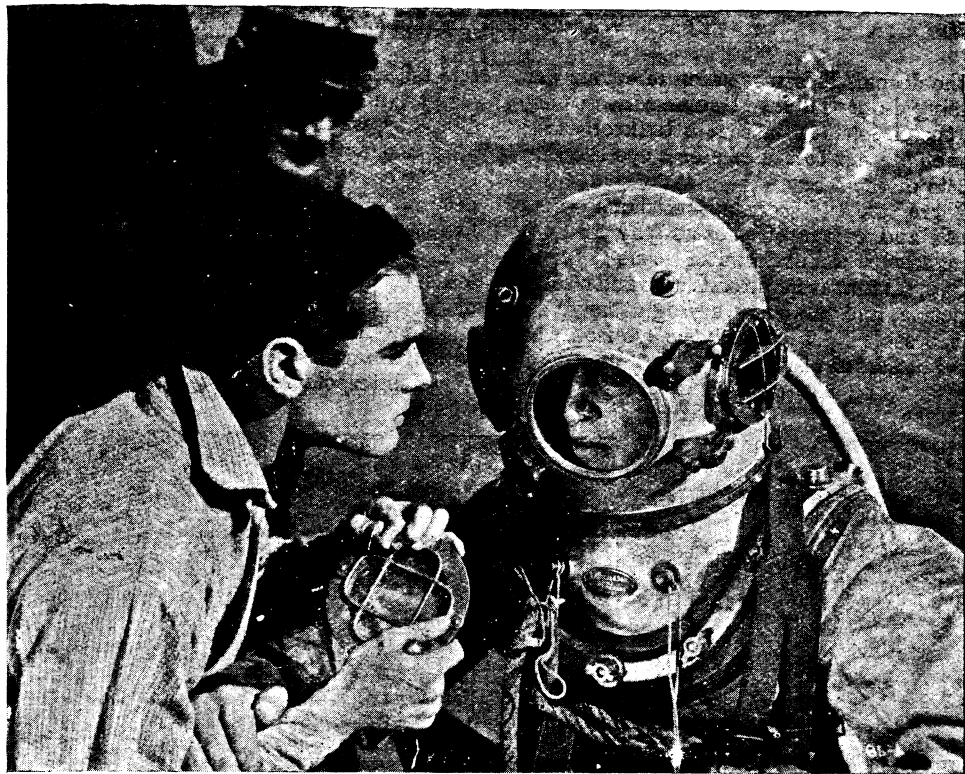
mortal man; but never for a day do she let me rest on my laurels. Not her! I laugh sometimes—on the wrong side of my face—when I'm dog-tired, and wonder if the old way weren't best, after all. But there it is. I ought to be home now, going on with our new chicken run at the bottom of the back garden. When the old one fell down in the storm and killed three hens, I was for going off then and there to Mace, the carpenter. But not a chance! 'Drat Mace,' she said. 'Don't you throw away none of your hard-earned money on Mace. You get a bit of wood and some old tarpaulin from the fishermen and a bit of wire, and do it yourself, Bob. You're a far better carpenter than twenty Maces.' And of course she's right. 'Thank Heaven,' I said, 'I don't belong to no Trades Union, for if I did, with my knack to do the work of a dozen skilled trades, I'd soon be in trouble.' And she said, 'A dozen, Bob? Show me the skilled craft you ain't master of. I'd like to know what it is!' Then she kissed me. So there I am, mother."

"Yes, there you are," admitted old Mrs. English. "A wonderful woman, as I always knew. And so that's how she's got back on you? And now it's your turn. I'll think about it, Bob. Whether you're paying too long a price for her goodwill and applause is the nice question."

"I wouldn't say that—not yet," he answered; "but of course if the pace gets too hot, my old dear, I may fly to the 'Amalgamated Plumbers' for protection. Only once I join them 'tis good-bye to my genius, and I'd sink to be just a plumber, like any other man, and no more."

It was a nice question, as old Mrs. English truly said, and Bob ain't solved it yet. Last time I looked over his back wall, he was building a cradle of willow wands, and doing it so well as any basket-maker you ever saw.





PREPARING FOR A DESCENT FOR AN UNDERWATER SCENE IN THE PARAMOUNT PICTURE  
"BELOW THE SURFACE."

# MAKING MOTION PICTURES UNDER WATER

By M. OWSTON-BOOTH

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THERE was a time, not so very long ago, when the only requisite for the making of underwater scenes in a motion picture was a tank of muddy water. With capable management and the employment of certain elementary tricks of photography, the tank was made to give a fair "working" representation of the ocean. To the public of that time motion pictures were in themselves so novel that the additional wonder of an incident enacted in water produced a kind of sympathetic response to the deception, so that what the

tank of water lacked in realism was more than supplied by the spectator's imagination.

But all scenes produced upon this disingenuous principle were subject to the narrowest limitations in action and scope. Only "close-up" effects were possible, of course, and the pictures lacked not only vista and perspective, but colour.

Between the definite black and white of expert photography are the suggestive equivalents of all the tints in the rainbow. A sea picture should have a wealth of colour, subdued though it may be in the twilight



of the deeps. This suggestion of colour was missing from the faked submarine scenes, for the simple reason that a tank of water cannot present to the camera's eye the rich effects of the sea.

There are, of course, occasions when depth and colour of photography are unnecessary to an underwater scene; when, in fact, all that is required is ease and clarity of action, and the ever-varying atmosphere of the sea might distract the eye from the rapid action of the story.

This being the case, and though some

sea might be possible, but the increased danger, to say nothing of expense and difficulty, would scarcely be justified, seeing that the action was sufficiently localised for "close-up" views to be all that was necessary. More realistic underwater scenes have seldom been made.

The first authentic sea pictures were taken through a glass-bottomed boat. These, of course, were merely scenic studies, enabling fish and seaweed and sea-flowers to be observed in their natural element. When interpolated among the faked tank



A DIVER ABOUT TO DESCEND IN THE WARDLOUR FILMS PICTURE "VENGEANCE OF THE DEEP."

marvellous motion picture work has been done on the bed of the ocean, the tank system is not by any means a thing of the past. Its narrow and particular use for the making of "close-up" scenes and the filming of difficult "stunts" cannot be superseded by the ocean itself. Improved greatly in size, character, scenic illusion and light and shadow effects, the modern tank has given us many remarkable scenes.

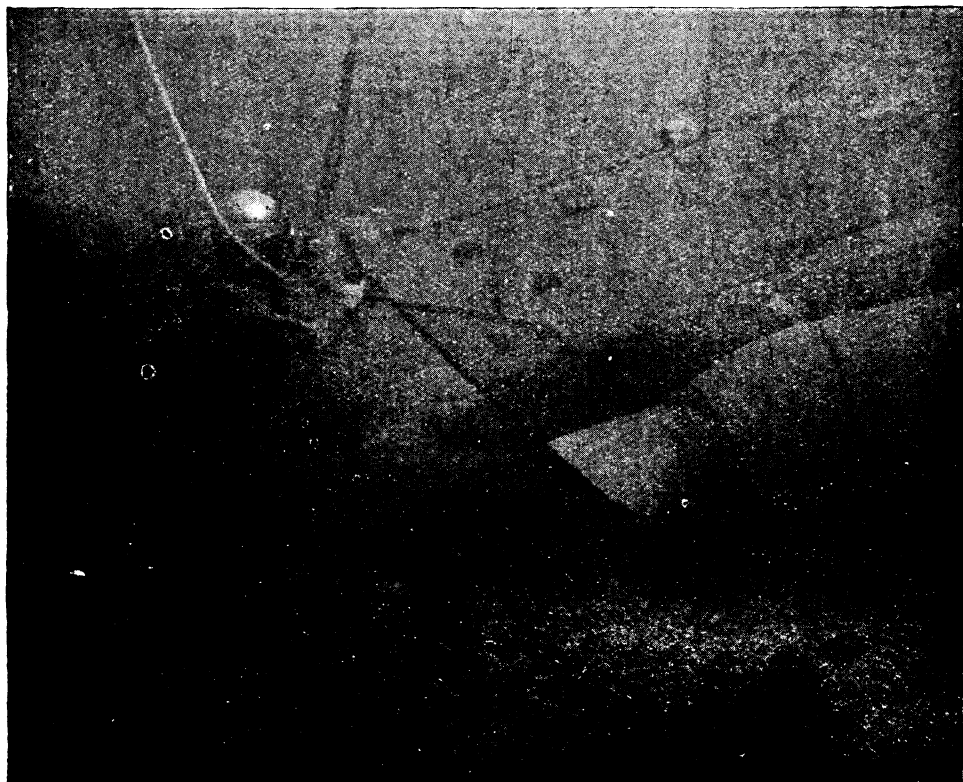
A typical instance was the thrilling episode of "Terror Island," in which Houdini dived to the rescue of a girl who had been thrown from a ship inside a bound and padlocked trunk. To film such an incident in the actual

scenes with their human action, they proved quite effective, lending realism to all.

Some of these photographs, taken from the surface of the water, were things of considerable beauty. Sea water, curiously, is much more transparent than fresh water, and light penetrates to a depth of about sixty feet. The transparency increases as one travels further from shore, and photographic studies made in mid-ocean, in carefully selected areas, had very much the appearance of having been done on the ocean bed—in fact, it is only by contrast with the genuine submarine picture that essential differences can be detected.



SPEARING A MORAY IN A SCENE OF J. E. WILLIAMSON'S PICTURE "WONDERS OF THE SEA." (FILM BOOKING OFFICES (1919) LTD.)



ONE OF THE SCENES IN THE PARAMOUNT PICTURE "BELOW THE SURFACE."

It is difficult to credit this, perhaps, until one remembers that zoophytes and sea plants growing on the floor of the ocean many fathoms deep often appear to be sufficiently near the surface to be plucked from a boat.

pictures which were as beautiful as they were novel and as educative as they were amazing. The Williamsons have remained the leading authorities upon submarine photography, the classic interpreters of marine life through the medium of motion pictures.

Their new film "Wonders of the Sea" brings before one's eyes sights which none but the diver has ever seen in actuality—deep-sea monsters in their homes, the richly delicate flora many fathoms deep, coral reefs and the wrecks of ships.

The apparatus used by the Williamsons consists of a glass tank large enough for three persons, including the camera-man, to ride in it to the bottom of the sea. This glass vessel is connected with a flexible iron tube with telescopic sections, which reaches to a specially built craft on the surface of the water, and is the medium by which air is obtained below. Behind his glass window sits the camera-man, dry and secure, surrounded by the drama and comedy, the beauty and cruelty, of aquatic life. Divers descend into the



AN UNDERWATER SCENE IN THE WARDOUR FILMS PICTURE "VENGEANCE OF THE DEEP."

Shortly after the employment of this method the Williamson Brothers invented their deep-sea photographic apparatus, and, working with it in the Bermuda Islands, produced some marvellous pictures of the aquatic gardens and their inhabitants,

area of the camera's reach, and their strange, unrehearsed adventures form the incidents of the photographs made.

Another new picture of a similar nature is "Vengeance of the Deep," which is claimed to be the first fiction drama ever enacted



LULU McGRATH FORTY FEET BELOW THE SURFACE, IN J. E. WILLIAMSON'S PICTURE  
"WONDERS OF THE SEA." (FILM BOOKING OFFICES (1919) LTD.)



A SCENE IN THE PATHÉ SERIES OF UNDERWATER STUDIES.

under water. It is a romance of the South Pacific pearl fisheries, photographed off the Hawaiian Islands, and is really a remarkable achievement. In the course of the story one sees a diver held fast by a giant clam on the ocean bed, a terrific fight with a man-eating shark, divers exploring the jungles of the sea, and many unique pictures of the native pearl industry.

The producer of this picture, A. B. Barringer, is the inventor of a new kind

novel "Caleb West, Master Diver," which was retitled "Deep Waters" when shown on this side. At the bottom of the Pacific, near Catalina Island, some thrilling submarine scenes were photographed, Tourneur directing them either in a diving suit on the hazardous location itself, or by telephone from the raft above, or from the diving-bell in which the camera-man worked. He is credited with having introduced the telephone into the production of underwater



A RIVER BULLHEAD SHARK WITH ITS PARASITE, A SHARK-SUCKER, ATTACHED TO ITS SIDE:  
A SCENE IN THE PATHÉ SERIES OF UNDERWATER STUDIES.

of helmet which marks another step forward in the production of submarine pictures. This generates its own air below the surface, and does away with the need for diving suits and air-pipe lines. The film, instead of showing the customary divers in unwieldy, even grotesque, submarine suits, has its characters clothed as they would be on land and moving about with ease and freedom.

Maurice Tourneur, the French-American producer, has experimented to a considerable extent with under-sea photography. He made a film of F. Hopkinson Smith's

films—a modern improvement of great importance.

Another memorable Tourneur picture is "Below the Surface," a drama in which a shipwreck is staged with the utmost realism. The descent of the ship into the water was followed by the camera, presumably in a diving-bell, and some peculiarly impressive views of the destroyed vessel were procured, these actually showing passengers lost in the wreck! The particular "shots" revealing this human flotsam were an example of ingenious faking, however,





PHOTOGRAPHING SEENA OWEN AND E. K. LINCOLN FOR A SCENE IN THE SEA FOR THE PARAMOUNT PICTURE "THE WOMAN GOD CHANGED."



A SCENE IN THE PATHÉ SERIES OF UNDERWATER STUDIES.

for there were no casualties in the production of the film.

Hobart Bosworth, who played the rôle of the diver in "Below the Surface"—without any previous experience of the work—undertook similar duties in "The Cup of Life," adding another chapter of daring to a long history of varied risks for motion pictures. On this latter occasion he fought a shark under sixteen feet of sea. To make it more likely that the actor would come off victorious, the shark was harnessed with wires, so that his movements would be under some sort of control from above, but he was able to swim freely and to put a good deal of action and strength into the fight. Over and over again Bosworth had to dive before he could, without too much danger, approach sufficiently near to plunge a knife into the monster. The harnessing of the shark being a new experiment, it was problematical whether the wires would hold or break, and how the battle would end.

Even tank scenes have an element of danger, as was proved by Douglas Fairbanks when appearing in "The Mollycoddle." A large yellow-fin, weighing about seventy pounds, objected to his presence and, swinging his tail around in anger, hit the actor's face and head, completely stunning him for several minutes.

In "The Pathé Pictorial" there recently appeared a series of underwater studies of

striking interest. Whereas the big submarine features have provided a wealth of drama and spectacle, sensational sight and colourful beauty, these short pictures have been made on more intensive lines, being concerned with the fascinating detail of marine life. One of the series portrayed the facial expressions and peculiarities of the numerous types of fishes. Another showed the movements of swimmers under water. Another dealt with the habits of carnivorous denizens of the deep.

Among the most interesting of these Pathé photographs were those showing the parasites of the shark. These include the shark-sucker, which attaches itself to the shark's side by a special suction disc, and travels with the creature wherever it goes, releasing its hold only to feed on scraps from the shark's prey; also the pilot fish, which depends in the same way for its food upon the activities of the shark, stealing portions of its meals.

To see the modern underwater picture is to believe that underwater photography has been brought to a state of perfection. Apparently, however, the ambitions of producers are not yet satisfied, for a considerable amount of experiment is still in progress—a fact which may be taken as a promise for the future of even greater familiarity, through motion pictures, with the life under the sea.

## A WINTER SONG.

**O**H, fair the holly is that shows  
The lovely colour of the rose,  
And shelters with her shining bough  
A gladness only winter knows.

**O**h, brave the holly is that wears  
The warrior green that spring declares,  
And binds about her frosty leaf  
As bright a thorn as summer dares.

**O**h, sweet the holly is that wrongs  
Not winter where her bough belongs,  
Yet from the lost flowers in the earth  
Draws fragrances, and thoughts, and songs.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.



“What do you expect me to say?” “That you forgive Lionel Taybram.”

# THE PENNY BANK

By B. A. CLARKE

Author of “*A Free Hand*,” “*Minnows and Tritons*,” “*Both Sides of the Road*,” etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

“MR. PULSFORD wants Mr. Coles in the board room,” said the junior clerk, replacing the whistle in the speaking-tube.

A tall, brushed-up, iron-grey man got down from an office-stool.

“How comes it that the Chief sends for you, Coles?” asked the Secretary, who happened to be in the general office. “I am responsible for all clerical matters; criticisms or instructions should be given through me.”

“It is a personal matter, sir.” When he reached the board room, the clerk slipped in and shut the door behind him hastily, being anxious that no one should observe the terms he was upon with his superior.

“Well, Stephen, another anniversary. This is the fortieth, and a perfect one, the Monday before Christmas coming on the eighteenth, as in 1882. How fateful that Monday was for us both!”

“Fateful—and hateful! I take it you haven’t sent for me ‘For Auld Lang Syne.’”

In those few words was expressed the accumulated bitterness of forty years of undeserved failure.

“I wished to make sure that the hour of the Penny Bank had not been altered. You declare, after every Christmas rush, that in the future you will open the doors earlier.”

“It is as before—half-past seven. But I wish, Mark, you would drop it. What is gained by keeping a wound open?”

“We see things differently. Penance to you is mere mediævalism. But what is the good of arguing? We shall never see eye to eye. How much are you taking down?”

“A hundred and fifty pounds, which is ample.”

“Well, I shall have fifty. We mustn’t risk a repetition of 1882. Do you remember—”

With a gesture of irritation Coles turned on his heel.

\* \* \* \* \*

In December, 1882, on the staff of Carl Mathews, insurance broker, were these two



men, both twenty-five years old. Pulsford had charge of the books. Normally Coles helped Mathews place the insurances, but during the broker's illness—which had lasted since October—he acted as principal, with power of attorney to sign documents and cheques. It was this fact that made his jaw drop when Lionel Taybram, an independent underwriter with whom he was transacting business, suggested his getting authority to endorse cheques in his chief's absence, thereby saving his colleague the trouble of getting "order" cheques made "bearer," as with Taybram's cheque to Mathews last week. The inference was as plain as it was ugly.

Stephen did not let Mr. Taybram see that anything was amiss. He hurried back to the office, and, finding Pulsford there alone, charged him with having misappropriated a cheque.

Pulsford pleaded guilty, but he made an explanation that he seemed to think was an excuse. He had bought heavily a certain mining stock, about which he had received inside information, on margin. It had slumped temporarily, and his margin would have been wiped out if it had not been supported by this cheque of Taybram's. The price hardening, as it was bound to, and his original margin being restored thereby, he had that morning sold out just enough of his holding to enable him to repay Mathews. By holding on to the remainder he hoped to make five hundred. But he wouldn't speculate again. He had had a fright and a lesson. The discreditable episode of the borrowed cheque would have no successor—Coles might rely upon that. He was dumb-founded when Stephen insisted that Mr. Mathews must be told. He ridiculed, argued, implored, and finally wept, but with no result beyond the exaction of a promise of silence until the return of their principal.

"Hadh't you better get the cheque now for your sold shares and make good the bank shortage?" said Coles at last impatiently. "Don't think, however, that that will clear you of dishonesty," he added, as an after-thought.

Pulsford left the office with head bent and hands together as if already they felt the handcuffs. He returned smiling, buoyant, almost, it seemed to Coles, threatening.

"Have you made good Taybram's cheque?"

"That will do to-morrow."

"Why not to-day?"

"That's my secret, Mr. Righteous Over-much."

"Has it any connection with your having cashed your own cheque in small change?" asked Coles, pointing to his colleague's bulging pocket.

"Possibly. You'll know as soon as anyone—I promise that. Whether you will relish the explanation is another matter."

Eight hours later—to be precise, at five minutes to seven—Stephen arrived at Tancered Mission Hall, and descended to the underground infant class-room, that on Tuesday nights was transformed into a penny bank by the introduction of a counter, the bequest of a local grocer. It was somewhat of a white elephant, being oversize for any room but the great hall, where it came out strongly at rummage sales. Here it touched the wall on one side and the fireplace on the other. This cut both ways. Working behind it, the bank secretaries were immune from intrusion, but they could get in and out only by climbing. The counter was in two pieces, and there was a right and a wrong way of placing these. Stephen put his head down and sniffed suspiciously. It was all right. The end where the testator had cut up his bacon and soap Roper, the hall-keeper, had rammed into the wall, bringing the more aromatic counter against the fireplace. Behind stood three chairs. Stephen readjusted these to give Mr. Millard the aroma of tea which he preferred, and himself reminders of the Nearer East, coffee, and dates. The third chair was for an emergency helper, should one be needed and found. It was convenient to assume that he had a nose for soap. As the night wore on, these smells from immediately under one's nose would be merged in that of scorching wood from the counter end by the fire.

Stephen had barely made these adjustments when Roper entered with two canvas bags.

"Ah, the chicken food! How much did Mr. Millard ask you to get for us?"

"Twenty-five pounds, sir. Shall I turn the bags into the till?"

"I'll count it first: we must observe all the regular bank forms, you know. Besides, it will fill up the time until Mr. Millard comes."

"And keep you from fancying he may forget to bring the bank money with him, or be robbed of it on the way down. I often wonder you come so early when waiting makes you so 'jumpy.' I get a bit that way

myself when the crowd outside is gathering, knowing that there is no way of paying them if Mr. Millard should fail us. Disappointed, they'd be an ugly mob to face."

"Roper, you and I go through this dreadful half-hour every year. Mr. Millard knows that his cutting things so fine is a torment to us. Why can't he, then, arrive twenty minutes sooner?"

"You hear that? They are beginning early. I'd better go up and stand outside, or some of those bright boys will be kicking the door down."

Stephen counted the small change and got from the cupboard cash-box and ledgers, occupying himself for a quarter of an hour, after which, unable to keep still, he took to pacing the floor, cursing the selfishness of his senior, and detecting in the roar from the street an increasing note of anger. At twenty-five minutes past seven they *were* angry. Stephen took out his watch and saw the second hand make its staccato round four times. The blow, then, was really going to fall this year—the *Christmas withdrawal money was not coming*.

The half-hour struck; five terrible minutes dragged by. And then the outer door opened and a man's quick steps were heard descending the basement stairs. The class-room door flew open, revealing—Pulsford.

"Millard has absconded!"

"How do you know?"

"I was told where I got my cheque. He was in the same gamble as myself, but, being unable to hang on, was closed out, losing all his own money and other people's. So, knowing the hole you would find yourself in down here, instead of repaying Mathews at once, I cashed my cheque in gold and silver, and it is in this bag—eighty-seven pounds."

"Thank you a thousand times! But why not have told me this morning, or, at least, have come here earlier?"

"Because, if you had known earlier, you would have had the option of getting help elsewhere. Now you must borrow upon my terms."

"Your terms!" said Stephen, with white lips. "What are your terms?"

"Your promise not to report me to Mathews."

"Mathews has a right to know."

"Shall I take my money away, then? Make up your mind. I can't wait long. I have no wish to be caught by those beauties up there. Hark to your creditors!"

Coles turned white. The temptation was

overwhelming. But never yet had he gone counter deliberately to what he deemed right, and he felt that if he did so now he descended to a lower level permanently.

"Mathews has a right to know," he said, but his underlip trembled, and his surrender was imminent. To his amazement the bag was thrust into his hands.

"Here, take it. Do the best you can for me. We will discuss that again later on. I once saw a woman break a child's will. It was the most horrible sight. I won't break yours, although I could. Pull yourself together, man! I'll stand by you. What are my duties?"

"Adding up the cards. I will pay out the cash."

Stephen sat upon the counter and swung his legs across. Mark, who was always frightening his friend, cleared it with a running jump.

"Mark, you might have killed yourself! Roper, let them all down."

The staircase at once became an angry torrent. Mr. Millard's absence and the lateness of the start had raised a doubt of the bank's solvency. Everyone clamoured to be paid first. Both Coles and Pulsford were quick beyond the ordinary, and they pressed a senior scholar into their service; but even with the three going "hell for leather," the flood rose until Roper made a dam of the street door. Everyone was drawing the maximum. In itself this was a small matter, the majority always clearing right out at Christmas, but with no margin even a few pounds might be their undoing. Two at the cards was more than the payer could keep up with, so when there was a sufficient accumulation, Coles—leaving Pulsford to make the payments—scoured the building for loans from teachers and officers at work in various parts of it. The turning out of their pockets added to the bank's resources a further seven pounds. Returning with this forced levy, he overtook on the stairs Alice Day, Mr. Roper's niece. Mr. and Mrs. Day were the bank's chief creditors; a large withdrawal by them would be fatal. Alice had bank cards protruding like quills from the eight spaces between her fingers.

"And how much are you withdrawing, dear?"

"Mother wants fifteen pounds on hers, Daddie wants five, and all us kids go the limit."

"Over twenty pounds, eh? Well, Alice, I don't think it is safe for a little girl like

you to carry all that. Many would see you given it, remember, and you might be followed. Tell mother that your uncle will bring her the money to-night."

Alice pouted her disappointment, and went home reluctantly.

When Stephen climbed over the counter he was whistling. Things could not have gone better. His handling of Alice Day had been masterly. If enough was left in the till, Roper should take his sister cash, otherwise the treasurer's cheque. Lionel Taybram held this office, and it was he who had

trifling balance on his card. But, even so, it was close sailing. When at ten sharp the door was locked on the inside, there were nineteen unpaid customers in the class-room and about eight pounds in the till.

"What are the cards like, Mark?"

"Mostly small; this is for twenty-five shillings."

"Slip it to the bottom. Serve the white-bait first. I am going to give precedence to the little ones," he said aloud. "I am sure those of you who are parents will approve of this."



"'You ought to be in your little cot, Tommie—you naughty child, you!' cried a falsetto humorist."

interested Coles in the cause. To-night an important decision must be made concerning the lease, and as many of the committee and officers were shopkeepers, and this was Christmas week, a special meeting had been called for the unusual hour of eleven.

Under the influence of Stephen's cheerfulness tension relaxed perceptibly. First one and then another of the withdrawers left a

"Yes, indeed, bless their little hearts," said a matron. "One is sorry to see them up at this how-er. They ought to be asleep in their little cots."

Small people have small bank balances, but the converse doesn't hold, and when Coles called out benevolently, "Tom Wilks, three and eleven," a red-headed railway porter came forward.

"You ought to be in your little cot, Tommie—you naughty child, you!" cried a falsetto humorist.

The never-to-be-forgotten (or repeated) run upon Tancered Hall Penny Bank closed with this surprising note of hilarity, and with what was even more surprising—a sovereign in the till.

The senior scholar was thanked and dismissed, and the two friends balanced their

"I can't see that your magnanimity towards me affects the rights of Mr. Mathews in any way."

"Stephen, you are impossible. The moral obligation for which you would sacrifice your chum doesn't exist. No one else would even perceive it."

"That is easily said when I am debarred from putting it to the test."

"Is that a challenge? Very well, then.



"'I am going to give precedence to the little ones,' he said aloud. 'I am sure those of you who are parents will approve of this.'"

books at the mantelpiece while the apartment, by the removal of the counter, was reverting from bank premises to classroom.

"I shall always be in your debt for this," said Stephen, when Roper's withdrawal with the last desk chair left them alone.

"I hope not. It is in your power to repay me. You know how."

Submit the case to Mr. Taybram. You must agree to accept his ruling, mind."

"Certainly, and I shall rejoice if he says I may keep your secret. But surely you are very rash making your breach of trust known to one in the insurance world."

"How slow you are, Stephen! Don't you see that Taybram must be told? Otherwise he would be giving me away quite

innocently at any time. If I confide in him, he will help me. He isn't called 'Second Chance Taybram' for nothing. Where can we see him to-night?"

"Here. He will be passing this door on his way to the committee room at any minute. I hear his hansom coming."

They waylaid the treasurer and dragged him into the class-room. After Stephen had got from him cheques for Mrs. Day and for the eighty-seven pounds of Mark's, the young men asked him to judge between them.

His verdict was that Mathews must be told. There *was* risk in leaving in a position of trust one who had violated it, and it was for their employer to decide whether or no he would take it. For the first time Pulsford lost hope.

"Between you I am being pushed into the gutter. Why, I am in the gutter now! Without a character who will employ me? What can I do?"

"My boy, you should know me better than to believe you will be left to sink. When I sail into port, my log-book must have no entry of a signal of distress ignored."

"You are very kind, sir, but what can you do? What can even your influence do for a clerk who has lost his character?"

"Find him a berth, give him a second chance; interest my friends, and stand surety for him, if that is demanded. Even in the old days I never failed to force some opening, and it is easier for me to-day because all my *protégés* have made good—all. God bless them!"

"I didn't think the world contained men like you."

"It happens that I can take you myself. Mr. Hunter, my assistant, is making a start for himself. This morning I had other ideas about his successor, but your coming to me to-night, within a few hours of my getting his resignation, seems providential."

"It isn't fair—it isn't fair!" cried Coles passionately. "Your idea was to give this position to me, whom you have known from childhood. Take back your offer to this stranger, Mr. Taybram, take it back! Think of all the unpaid work I have done for your charities! Does that all count for nothing, that the first tearful thief can oust me? If this goes through, who would be honest?"

"Stephen, my dear boy, control yourself. I admit that you have been in my mind as Mr. Hunter's possible successor. But you know the proverb about insurance brokers

making the worst underwriters. Mr. Pulsford was for a short time with an underwriter. I certainly prefer his record."

"In a month with you I should learn far more than he knows to-day. You prefer his record! What record? His record as a thief! It is with that he beats me. If he had run straight, you wouldn't have considered him for a moment against me, the son of your old friend. But you would sacrifice a child, if you had one, to this slobbering soft-heartedness for the unworthy. You glory in the second chances you have placed in your friends' offices. I wonder how many honest men have lost their chances in life to your gaol-birds!"

"Stop, Stephen, stop, or our friendship ends! I have given this position to Mr. Pulsford. As he is leaving Mr. Mathews, and I don't ask for a character, no one but you and myself must ever know of his fault."

"Is it necessary to say that? Do you think I would stab a successful rival in the back?"

"Of course not, Stephen. You are integrity itself."

"Much weight that has had in your scales, or my services. Why, you haven't even listened to me!"

It was true. There is a dark as well as a bright side to enthusiasms. Taybram had an affection for Stephen, but for the moment he saw in him only an obstacle to the satisfaction of his noble obsession.

"Mr. Pulsford is appointed; say no more, Stephen. It was his only chance. You will have others."

"Chances for a young man without money to get a seat at Lloyd's beside a leading underwriter only come once in a lifetime, if that. I shall never be anything now but a drudge. Pulsford may become the head of a great company possibly, but he will never again know self-respect. Whatever show he makes outwardly, to himself, as to me, he will always be a crook—a despicable trust betrayer."

"A thousand times 'No'! 'Though he has lien among the pots, yet shall he be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers of gold!'"

With an inarticulate cry of rage Stephen snatched his coat and hat and rushed away. Blinded by tears of mortification, he ran his forehead against the angle of the staircase, but he felt no pain, and he was surprised when Mr. Roper, to whom he remembered to give the Days' cheque, told him that there was blood on his face.

Since that night forty years had passed, but Stephen was still secretary of the Penny Bank.

After his brief interview with Mr. Pulsford in the board room, Stephen Coles returned to the outer office with a quickened sense of its humiliations. There was no justice on earth. The righteous perched on office stools; the wicked sat in the seats of underwriters. Not that he had any quarrel with Pulsford. Forty years ago he had admitted, after his first outburst was spent, that no one in Mark's predicament could have refused Taybram's offer. He had said as much to his rival the very next day, and friendly relations (of a sort) had been resumed. The use of Christian names was continued, but Stephen would never concede that Mark had purged his guilt, and, lacking that, there could be no true reconciliation. "They stood aloof, the scars remaining, like cliffs that had been cloven asunder."

Lionel Taybram, who *had* wronged him, he let die unorgiven, although with humility that was touching (considering their respective positions in the world) the old man had sought the clerk's pardon with tears. "To be wrath with those we love doth work like madness in the brain."

Stephen's forecast had been justified in every particular. He continued with Mathews until his employer's son was old enough to displace him, when he was glad to take shelter with the Security Marine Insurance Company, who paid him rather more for routine than Mathews had for highly responsible work. But he was a drudge, with no chance now of rising to anything better.

From assisting Taybram Pulsford had come in time to succeed him, and had done so well that more than one of the great marine insurance companies had made him offers. At sixty he accepted the underwritership of the Security at a salary of four thousand with a five years' contract. This contract had nearly run out this December afternoon in 1922, when he summoned Stephen Coles to the board-room and made arrangements for his anniversary visit to the mission.

Stephen reached Tancred Hall as Pulsford was paying his taxi-driver.

Mr. Roper welcomed them—not the original doorkeeper, but his son.

"Merry Christmas, Roper!" said the underwriter genially.

"Same to you, sir. It wouldn't be

Christmas week without Mr. Pulsford. You aren't going to cut my father?"

"Of course not. A merry Christmas, old friend!" said Mark, turning to a withered paralytic in a bath-chair.

"What is he doing here, Ted? Why doesn't Mr. Millard come with the bank money?"

"Better wheel him home, Alice," growled the hall-keeper, addressing our old acquaintance, little Alice Day, now Mrs. Bert Reynolds.

"Not until I have shaken hands with Mr. Pulsford. Why, Mr. Pulsford was one of my admirers!"

Alice Day that was belonged to the class of middle-aged women who, having lost all their youthful charms, retain unimpaired their girlish coquettishness. Pathetic and ludicrous; when combined with simplicity of mind, it can be pleasing also.

"If you want my endorsement of your statement, Mrs. Reynolds, you must alter the tense."

She bridled and blushed.

"I am afraid you are a dreadful flatterer," she said, extending a work-roughened hand.

"I shan't shake hands with *you*, Mr. Coles. I haven't forgiven you for sending me home as a child without the family Christmas money, pretending I wasn't old enough, indeed, when all the while it was because you hadn't sufficient money to pay me. Perhaps, as it is Christmas, I will forgive you."

"Who is saying there isn't enough money?" piped the veteran. "I knew there was something wrong when I saw that man; there is always a run on the bank when he comes instead of Mr. Millard."

"You had better take him home at once, Alice," whispered the hall-keeper.

Alice bent over the bath-chair.

"It's all right, uncle—it's all right, dear." (She patted the shrunken cheeks, and no young girl's hand could have fallen on them more lightly.) "Mr. Coles is here with the bank money—his pockets are stuffed with notes and gold."

"Let me wheel the chair across the road for you," said Stephen.

"Not *you*, Mr. Coles. Uncle would think you were absconding."

She looked expectantly at Mr. Pulsford, but he did not respond. She went off with a toss of her head, but across the road she waved to him.

"My cousin keeps her spirits wonderfully, considering what she has been through,"

said the hall-keeper. "She has never let disappointments sour her."

"I wish, Roper, you would keep the boys from skylarking on our steps," Coles exclaimed pettishly. At the foot of the staircase Mr. Pulsford noticed a small step-ladder (it had been used for the changing of a gas-burner), and carried it with him into the class-room, where he used it Robinson Crusoe-wise to surmount the counter stockade before their fastness.

The Christmas withdrawal ran its accustomed course. Forty years had not changed either routine or environment. With the old spicy breezes blending like tunes in counterpoint with the old smell of scorching wood in their nostrils, and breathing the old atmosphere (Pulsford, glancing at the tall, never-opened windows, thought it might even be the very same air) they handled similar dog-eared cards similarly. By ten-fifteen the last withdrawer had withdrawn himself, the cash had been balanced, and the ledgers returned to the cupboard. Here came a break with tradition. Roper did not remove the counter.

"I asked him not to," said Pulsford. "I wished to have a long chat with you, Stephen, and his coming in and out would have been an embarrassment."

Stephen sat on the counter and swung his legs over.

"Hand two chairs across, then. I'm not going to remain any longer in that draught from the window."

He put the chairs near the fire, while Mark was leaving the fort as he had entered it.

"What a chap you are, Mark, for keeping things up!"

"Jokes and penances, eh? Well, that is better than perpetuating resentments."

"I have no grievance against you."

Pulsford leant forward from his chair and touched his friend on the knee.

"But you retain your harshness towards Taybram. The dear old fellow felt your estrangement keenly."

"Did he ever recognise that I had anything to forgive?"

"I don't think he did. Enthusiasts see only one side. He saw mine and that of others in my quandary. Nine out of ten people show a defect of compassion. The tenth displays the mean. Taybram was unique in illustrating the extreme. He was *fanatically compassionate*, and the object was always the same—some man who was being pushed under, some first offender whom our horrible business code that for a breach of

honesty there is no forgiveness would destroy."

"What started this obsession?"

"I could never find out. His own record, of course, was spotless. He was as incapable of a side-slip as you are. One who had known him in his fourth year at Oxford told me that he was called 'Second Chance Taybram' even then. I don't doubt there was some tragedy behind it—a brother, perhaps, who had gone under for lack of a saving hand. Seeing so much of him, sitting beside him all day long, I got right into his heart, and I learnt this—that he literally lived for nothing else than to be this saving hand. He did any amount of good—I am only one of scores who owe him everything—but there was one thing he overlooked, and this I supplied. I am going to tell you something now about myself, because your refusal to reinstate me in your esteem keeps you bitter towards him."

"In what way did you supplement Taybram?"

"By organising the gratitude of his *protégés*. The first move had to come from Taybram. I got him to write to all the men he had restored, asking them if they would be willing to be brought into touch with others of similar experience with a view of co-operating to further Taybram's aims. Ultimately thirty of us met. You can imagine our common embarrassment. Each of us was confessing to twenty-nine utter strangers that he had been a thief!"

"Nothing could justify such self-exposure."

"Nothing but a great outcome."

"What was the outcome?"

"A brotherhood, each one pledged in the course of every year to restore at least one first offender."

"It couldn't be done. One might go years without hearing of a case in one's own circle."

"We had to step outside our own circles. We went to police-courts, and interested ourselves in young fellows released under the merciful provisions of the First Offenders Act. Some of us relied upon prison chaplains; others, again, haunted employment agencies. But each of us had to find his man and save him or leave the brotherhood, and we have lost none of our original members except by death. Our recruits, however, supply a percentage of quitters."

"Who are the recruits?"

"The men we rescue. Our first step is to introduce them to the brothers."

"Good Heavens, Pulsford, do you mean to say that any Tom, Dick, or Harry brought hot-foot from the police-court to-morrow may learn that the head of the great Security Insurance Company once misappropriated a cheque?"

"We don't concern ourselves with the criminal classes, only with first offenders to whom employment is impossible without a character."

"But, even so, the possibilities of blackmail are appalling."

"Stephen, you have never been bogged, and you don't know how one feels towards the man who pulls one out—what I felt forty years ago to-night towards Lionel Taybram. His goodness broke me. Well, there it is. Not only has there been no blackmailing, but we haven't had a case even of violated confidence. You are the only man who knows of my lapse except my fellow-criminals."

"I call it terrible. If you are constantly making confession more or less public, how can you ever regain your self-respect?"

"I don't know that I have. You prophesied that I never should."

"Don't rub it in, Mark. I am out of my depth. What you tell me seems at once repulsive and glorious. How many of you are there to-day?"

"Ninety, of whom eighteen, including myself, bach together. We have about a dozen spare rooms. Usually these are occupied by released first-sentence men."

"Do they pay?"

"If they can. Often their need is not board and lodging so much as an opportunity of mixing with decent men as equals. Solitude is dangerous, and after a prison term men often shun relatives and friends, fearing their scorn. They are at home with us, who have no right to despise anyone."

"Mark, you have become big—I can feel that. But I can't reconcile myself to this lack of reticence. It seems to violate the modesty of nature. Surely an aristocrat like Taybram could never have liked it?"

"At first he felt as you do, but he had to admit results. In approaching frail men who are down as frail men who have arisen, we had a dynamic transcending his altogether. Well, that's that."

"What do you expect me to say?"

"That you forgive Lionel Taybram."

"I do freely, but hear what I have to forgive. He had no right to sacrifice me to you. He brought me into the marine

insurance business, and promised my father—to whom at one time he had been under an obligation—to take me with him at the first opportunity. I still say it is wrong to put a premium upon dishonesty, and that is what his fanatical compassion led him into in preferring you to me, and it ruined my career, as I foresaw. And that is my last hard word or thought concerning 'Second Chance' Taybram. And I forgive you, Mark, for keeping me in such ignorance of what you were doing. Why did you let me eat out my heart in bitterness? In you I saw a wicked man flourishing like a green bay-tree, and I hated you, saying 'I do well to be angry.' And so all these forty years I have been growing smaller and smaller, as angry and jealous folk do, until I have become what I am to-day. For forty years I have been in bondage to wrath from which a little frankness on your part would have saved me. Being so open to strangers about your fault, need you have been quite so reticent to your friend about your good deeds? It isn't fair, Mark, it isn't fair. Forty years ago to-night, when we stood here with Taybram, I was a better man than you. I would have died for a principle, and you hadn't principle enough to fill a hollow tooth, and had never given a thought except to your own pleasure. And look at you to-day beside me! You have had it both ways. Well, I'll try not to think of it again. Perhaps there is a new robe for the elder brother also. If God is just, the prodigal can't be given *all*. That is over. We are real friends again from to-night, and I hope we shall see a great deal more of one another now."

"The very reverse, I am sorry to say. This is the last time we shall ever meet on earth. Perhaps you remember a few weeks ago my being away from the Security for some time. I was undergoing an operation for cancer. It was a forlorn hope. We know now that it failed completely. I may have three months to live, but that is the limit. I have told my directors that the contract, which expires on the thirty-first, will not be renewed. As a matter of fact, the doors of the Security closed behind me this afternoon for good. I have left my bachelory also. I sleep at the Grosvenor to-night, and to-morrow I start for the Engadine, where I shall live with my sister. No one but yourself knows this. My directors and my friends will receive letters to-morrow."

"Why—why?"



"I can't stand good-byes; they tear me to pieces. One wants to say everything, and can say nothing. With a heart breaking, one seems heartless. I had to clear up this old feud. As always on these anniversaries, I shall remain here until midnight, when the taxi returns for me. And now, Stephen, as all has been said between us that can be said, I want you to shake hands and leave without any further farewell."

While Stephen was struggling with his coat, Mark said: "You might put back the step-ladder as you go out. Roper will be wondering what has happened to it."

"Mark, tell me—that Robinson Crusoe stunt wasn't play? You needed the steps."

"Yes."

"You couldn't swing your legs over the counter?"

"It wouldn't have been—wise."

Stephen walked across the room with averted head. He couldn't face his friend after this. Mark, who had taken the counter on the run, now couldn't climb it even.

He shouldered the step-ladder, which

knocked off his hat. Mark retrieved it and placed it on Stephen's head, but the ladder-bearer kept his face averted, and walked away.

"Night, Mark!" he called from the doorway, still without turning.

"Good night, Stephen!"

Coles was the more ashamed of his emotion that it showed him to be unimaginative, the self-control, which had stood the hearing of his friend's affliction, being pulverised by a mere illustration of it. Moreover, the great tragedy was not the loss of the lees of Mark's life, but the quite needless embitterment of the best forty years of his own.

Putting back the steps, Stephen noticed the angle of the staircase against which he had banged his head forty years ago to-day (he examined his watch) almost to a minute. The cut on his temple, needing a couple of stitches, had been neglected, causing a permanent scar—at least, he had accepted the disfigurement as permanent. But it was some time since he had examined it. Trying the spot now with his finger, he could find no trace of the scar.

## THE ROBIN.

**M**Y spirit went a-wandering  
Out on a winter's day.  
There were berries on the hawthorn  
And a robin on the spray,  
Deep snow lay on the plough-land  
And on the hard highway.

The sky was grey above me,  
My soul was grey within,  
Sick of the old world's burden  
Of human hate and sin,  
For even here the country,  
Caught echoes of its din.

The robin on the hawthorn  
Fluttered his frozen wing,  
Along the bare hedge flitting,  
Tuning his throat to sing—  
A little fond familiar  
To the poor human thing.

His delicate clear piping  
Held such a gallant cheer,  
It brought to my craven spirit  
Hope and the scorn of fear,  
For he sang the old earth's patience  
And the birth of a new year.

My spirit went a-wandering  
Down the fresh budding lane,  
I saw the blessed south-west wind  
Steady the shifting vane,  
And the grape-bloom on the woodland,  
And the flight of an aeroplane.

The robin still beside me  
Kept gay companionship,  
But the lark's song rose from the meadow—  
He had no need to sing—  
Yet God give him in heaven  
A tiny angel's wing!

DOROTHY FRANCES GURNEY.



"Lem snatched, and knew from the weight what it must be. They had one of Mendaña's gold pieces!"

# GUN METAL

By JOHN RUSSELL

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

THERE were only the two of them on McFhee's great fortune hunt to Nbandi in the Santa Cruz—just the two of them, unless you count the monkey man they brought along to be roustabout and deck hand. But McFhee himself and his partner, Lem Hedrick, they made an able pair, and they figured exactly what they must do when they found the treasure. They settled it between them with the foresight of two wary old hands.

"This here is goin' to be a business of brains," declared McFhee.

He spoke like a pundit and he looked like a scarecrow—an ugly big rack of a scarecrow in his muddy rags and his grizzled beard. But Lem Hedrick did not smile. Nobody would ever have expected a smile on that ravaged face under the thatch of red hair—the face of a bitter loser at the game of life. He leaned on his spade to let his haunted eye run down the green-walled anchorage, over the sun-spangled lagoon and the sun-hazed Pacific, before he cut in with his sharp, precise manner—

"And dibs."

"And dibs," accepted Mac. "Brains and dibs. They go together, Lem. That's where lads like you and me mostly miss out. Brains we got, by times, and gold we've had one time or another. But when we had it we never knew enough to keep it. Ain't that true? And why?"

Hedrick shrugged impatiently, but Mac took another bite of tobacco and spat abroad with expansive intention as he continued—

"Why? Because we never could quit and clear with our own right share. It's the ruin of many an outfit, Lem. What happened to Whitey Edwards and his pals after they made their big strike on the Mambare fields? Started down for Port Moresby and begun cuttin' each other's throats on the road. Then the niggers got the last two; and there they lay, the poor fools, till somebody found 'em after the rains without no heads to 'em—stuck full of arrers like a couple o' hedgehogs—and enough dust in their packs to 'a' made 'em both Sydney-side millionaires! And how about the Jackson gang, that

bailed up the Walhalla bank? Might 'a' done a clean get-away, but they went to fightin' over the swag and got themselves copped in half a tick. There's the gentleman adventurer for you!"

"What are you telling me for?" snapped Lem.

McFee made a deprecating gesture.

"Wait till I'm through. I'm showin' you how things go wrong. Did I tell you how it was with the Chinyman who give me this tip we're on—the Chinyman who died at Woodlark whilst you was in hospital?"

"He was cook to this outfit of Spanishers when they came pokin' around here with their map two year ago. They'd found it in Manila, d'y' see? A map made by Mendaña himself, I figure. Way back in 1500 nothin'! The old-time navigator bloke that first landed in the Solomon Islands and named 'em so. Mendaña's cruise went bung—you'll find about it in all the history books—and he had to light out with a single ship and plant his gold. And he planted it by beachin' and burnin' his other craft—the one he called a pinnas—the one we got right under our feet this minute, Lem."

It was the measure of their success with what luxury Mac turned the tale on his tongue, and how Lem refrained from snarling overmuch at his long-winded way. The ease of achievement and impending reward was upon these men. They stood in the limpid, shallow water of the cove, beneath shady mangroves. Now and then a storm of many-coloured lories or kingfishers drove past them in the drowsy heat. Now and then a flight of sea-birds, far-flung white crescents, went whistling against the murmur of the reef, or a cockatoo screamed in the jungle, or a leaping fish splashed circles from the reeds. For the rest, the place was deserted, empty—one of the forgotten islets that stud the tropic seas like jewels on a brazen corselet. Unmindful of its beauty, they were aware of its quiet and its isolation. And resting there from a morning's work, either could verify for himself—under his very feet, as Mac had said—the bits of old oaken knees and planking, iron-hard fragments in the iron sand, which confirmed their wonderful discovery.

"Well?" prompted Lem.

"Well, the Chinyman was the only one to get away alive. All them Spanishers—gentlemen adventurers, d'y' see?—just as soon as they located this wreck, just as soon as they made certain-sure of their

layout, what must they do but start knifin'. They killed each other off like countin' out at tag. Likely you'd find 'em all buried on the cliff yonder, if you looked. They said there was a curse on the treasure."

"There's a curse on every treasure," observed Lem darkly. "I know that."

"Ah, and now you got my point. We're goin' to shift that curse, m' son."

"What way?"

"Just brains. Maybe it didn't take some smartness to puzzle out that Chinyman's yarn and the island he meant, hey? Maybe it wasn't a slick job to get our outfit together and scrape up credit for the cutter, and sneak us away here amongst the Santa Cruz without anybody else gettin' a smell. Maybe you think I yanked you outa hell there at Woodlark and brought you along for your good looks!" added Mac, with formidable pleasantry.

Hedrick only sniffed.

"I could eat you, Lem," said Mac slowly.

Hedrick made a snakelike movement towards his belt, but when he turned, the big man was grinning at him with his snags of yellow teeth.

"Yes, and you could sting me to death on that fang o' yours. I know it, you little red devil. It's too easy and it's too thick-headed. I picked you because you got 'em, too—brains, Lem. There ain't goin' to be no Whitey Edwards play with us."

He had captured the other's interest at last. Up and down the islands, Lem Hedrick had had a spell at most things—trader, pearl poacher, gold digger in the fevered welter of the Woodlark rush, even school-teacher and Government official under the sketchy administration of British Papua. He was no fool; he was only one of those who had missed and whose missing had been a sombre and secret tragedy—some story of desperate need and disappointed hope that always drew his yearning gaze toward the far horizon.

"I'm agreeable. You needn't fret about me," he stated crisply. "I reckon I can stand prosperity if you can. You mean we've got to play square and divvy as we go, I take it, with no risk of a squabble."

"Aye, a divvy in plain sight, piece by piece on the open deck, each man to keep a key to his own berth on the cutter. Goin' ashore or standin' watch, you to trust me and me to trust you. No liquor, no disputes. A straight course for Moresby as soon as we clean up, and a proper oath to keep all safe."

"An oath!" echoed Hedrick. "What kind of oath?" His usual scepticism struck in. "How do you know what kind of an oath would bind me?"

Mac's answer came pat.

"Because I remember you had a priest that day at hospital, Lem."

"Oh! And how do I know what binds you?"

"Because I was the lad that fetched the priest," concluded Mac simply as they eyed each other.

So they made their compact on Nbendi Island. It was a good compact, forehanded and complete as they could devise. It covered every contingency of good fortune, every step to cover their disposal of the treasure from the moment they should find it to the moment they should bank their shares with Burns-Philp at Port Moresby. It gave them a sense of companionship and a sense of safety they had lacked. Perhaps Lem Hedrick was even better pleased than McFhee himself. The weaker man, the more nervous temperament, he knew little of this grey-beard ruffian pal of his beyond the colour of a violent and criminal past.

Their common satisfaction sustained them through the rest of the morning, through the hardest bout of work they had put in yet, until the shadows fell short and they waded alongshore to the spot where their cutter lay moored under the cliff, and climbed aboard with grateful mind to tiffin. And there they found the monkey man laying out his tin dishes.

"Mac," exclaimed Hedrick, on a sudden thought, "look here! How about this chap?"

McFhee paused, scowling at the hatchway. "Who—Jackwo? Well, what about him?"

"I say, we can't bring him under oath."

It had the weight of a surprising idea. For the first time on their expedition—the first time in either's experience very likely—they considered a native by the light of a human problem.

"Where did he sign on from?" inquired Hedrick. "And what breed is he, anyhow?"

"I dunno. I got him along with the cutter. She'd been pearl shelling around the Louisiades somewhere last season. He's only a blasted black boy."

"A black boy can have notions of his own," observed Lem significantly. "What I'd like for information would be to hear his notion about gold."

"Gold! He never saw none. What

notion could he have? We pay him in trade goods; ten shilling for three months—and he ain't worth it," growled Mac. "A bad cook, and the silliest laughin' idjit I ever did see—even for a nigger. You'll allow that yourself. Take a look at him now, would'y?"

They took a look at him. Below in the cuddy the monkey man was setting the table. Even grandfathers are accounted boys among the islands, and this specimen might have been anywhere between twenty and forty—a spindly, knob-muscled, active body with splay feet and a frizzled high mop of hair, with the usual simple taste in adornment. About his middle he wore two scant yards of red cotton print. Through one perforated ear he carried a broken clay pipe; through the distended lobe of the other the half of a Petersen pill box. On his chest he sported a locket made from the battered dial of an ancient alarm clock. His skin was black—not ink black, nor soot black, but the exact shade of a polished rifle-barrel.

All ordinary enough. What was not so ordinary, quite—what set him apart from type as an individual—was his face. He had the face of a comedian. Mostly your full-blooded Papuan does not laugh by his lone; mostly he maintains a reserved, even a repellent, demeanour until times of group excitement, when he makes up for it with boisterous mirth. This Jackwo could laugh. He was laughing now—like a clown, like a face-making ape. And as he went about his work he spun the plates on his finger, he clicked the forks like knuckle-bones, anon he shuffled and hummed to some recondite rhythm.

The two white men watched, as white men always scornfully have watched the uncomprehended gyrations of the inferior race.

"Just the same," remarked Lem, "if this is going to be a matter of brains, as you put it, I want to learn a bit more about friend Jackwo. You can't tell; he might be one of these wise mission niggers, with a picklock. I've seen 'em."

"It's a fact."

"And, besides, he's a prying sort—always monkeying with things, always playing and juggling like that. Suppose he gets monkeying with our stuff?"

"It's a fact. We can't take no such chances," admitted McFhee. "But we'll blame soon find out how wise he is. . . . Hi, you boy!" he roared and dropped down

the hatch as a startling apparition that made the unfortunate Jackwo jump a foot high.

But all they could find out was no particular aid to the case. They had to carry on their inquiry in the barbarous locutions of *bêche de mer* English, with a vocabulary of some fifty words—thereabouts. One thing with another, they determined this much: that Jackwo was just what he appeared to be—a monkey man.

He came from the region of the Princess Marianne Straits, where folk live in tree-top nests like the orang-utan of Borneo. He belonged to a branch called by traders the salt-water bushmen—some tribe driven in warfare to seek the sea coast, where he had been caught by a local chief and sold into service for half a case of tobacco. Since then he had wandered from Thursday Island to the Trobriands, as boat boy, cook and coolie, more or less protected in these days of anti-blackbirding laws, more or less free under the white man's difficult mercies and the white man's ruthless exploitation.

Himself, he seemed harmless enough. That he bred from a cannibal strain, that his people were head-hunters and casual murderers in the same spirit that other people are birds' nest collectors or cricketers—these facts were familiar to Lem and Mac, and bothered them not at all. For such is the Big Black Belt of the South Seas, the last primordial strip; entirely incredible to the rest of a world that yells for the police if a neighbour goes barefoot, but perfectly commonplace and with a singular innocency of its own for those who live there.

Not being suburbanites exactly, they were very slightly concerned in learning how much of a savage Jackwo had been. What they wished rather to learn was just how civilised he might be. And here, after all, they found themselves pretty much at fault.

"It comes to this," summed McFhee at last: "if he's a slick nigger, he's almighty slick; and if he's as slick as that——"

He stopped. Lem Hedrick put a name to it, with an evil glint under his brows that made even McFhee blink.

"If he is, he won't last long. . . . Funny how quick these educated niggers drop off of fever."

"Ain't it too true?" agreed Mac.

There came an opportunity, however, to test their doubts in decisive fashion.

They had begun exploring toward the stern of the ancient wreck. She lay prow

to shore, where she must have been run in from the cove. Already they had laid bare the forward part down to her fire-blackened ribs. They were using a device like a miner's cradle—a rude box with double handles in which they packed the wet sand a spadeful at a time until they had enough to carry aside and dump. By this careful method, in heavy labour, they proposed clearing her whole inner shell.

Along toward noon of the next day Hedrick saw Mac dive and fish and dabble under water. He bent like a peering walrus, then straightened, gave a grunted exclamation and offered a tiny object on his shovel tip, a thing like a small black poker chip. Lem snatched, and knew from the weight what it must be. They had one of Mendaña's gold pieces!

In the reeking heat, shaken and worn as they were, they might very well have gone mad with it. It meant the proof of calculations which at the best had been so obscure, the cashing of a bet which at the most had been so vastly improbable. They might have whooped and cheered and celebrated like haggard maniacs in their exultation, in the wide-flung opening of escape and fulfilment so rabidly desired. But they did not. A conscious constraint held them. If their cheeks flushed, if their fingers trembled a bit while they passed the thing back and forth, they remained alert and observant of each other—each gauging the other's emotion. Two wary old hands, as before said.

The prize itself was a crude piece, about the size of a shilling, dimmed and encrusted through the years. It bore no discernible stamp; very possibly had been the product of some makeshift mint in Peru, before the fated navigator set forth on his dream quest to found a colony and to carry trade beyond the world's end. But it was a button of pure gold, unmistakable, and McFhee put its value and its meaning quaintly.

"How," he asked, "are we going to divvy this?"

Lem answered with equal coolness: "We're not going to divvy. Let the divvy-ing wait till we find the cache. But see here, Mac, we've got just what we need to try out the nigger."

"Jackwo——"

"To try him out. We'll give it to him and see how he acts and what he does. Understand—to check up his notion about gold?"

Mac nodded grimly. "That's brains!"

They gave over digging for the rest of the morning. They climbed aboard their cutter, where the monkey man was pottering about deck. And straightway, with word and gesture of an accompanying gift, Mac laid the gold piece on his palm. It made a curious moment for them all—for the whites, who sought to assay an alien nature; for the black, whose reaction involved his life.

Here stood Lem Hedrick, keen, fine-drawn and dangerous as the knife at his belt. Here stood McFhee, rugged type of the conquering caste, with lowered jaw and a regard fixed frowningly intent. Between them they applied the acid drop of civilisation to this strange racial metal.

The driving sunlight, which struck sparks red-gilt from Lem's matted hair, silvery from Mac's bristled beard, was drowned in smooth lustre on the swart limbs and features of Jackwo, the native, the cannibal, the monkey man.

He took the gold piece and examined it, wondering. First he snuffed at it. He bit it and wondered more. He held it flat in both palms and rubbed hard, and when he looked again it showed clean and bright as if scoured in shark skin. Whereat he laughed aloud.

He began to toss and catch it in the air, a little toss at a time. He juggled with it, and its mellow twinkle seemed to give him mystic joy. For presently he balanced it on his thumb and, with a wide, delighted sweep, sent it spinning high over the cove. An instant it glittered against the blue; an instant it shot a golden streak between two gorgeous purple-winged, yellow-spotted butterflies that hovered far out. Then it went flashing down, down, and met the water with a tiny hiss, as if it had been white-hot; and the monkey man laughed and squirmed and danced on the deck.

Lem and Mac stayed silent some while. With a certain regret, their gaze lingered on the small, widening ripples yonder. After a time Mac sighed.

"Well, so much for so much. Satisfied, Lem?"

"Let's hurry with the grub and get back to work," returned Hedrick curtly; and that was what they did, and the sum of their lives for the next three days.

They were perfectly confident now of their prospect. They grew to think of the treasure as something assured—almost as if they had put it away themselves. And this was natural, too; so it would have been with any tough, salted customers of their

sort. Throughout the Black Belt the fable of the Isles of Solomon is gospel for old-timers. From Dorey to Samarai—all the way down the great archipelago that fringes the cruel sphinx-like unknown continent of Papua—men still keep the tradition. Men still find now and then the strangest evidence.

In the dwelling of a remote chief, in village club-houses, perhaps—palaces among huts that amaze the scientist—they come upon a collection of smoked human heads laid up as a kind of local art exhibit—heads of enemies, heads of hapless castaways from far tribes and far peoples—Chinese, Malays and Sulumen, gold seekers, labour stealers and pirates unnamed. And sometimes they find the head of a white man; and sometimes it is very ancient, indeed, with stiff hair and bearded lips and rings in the ears; with sunken eyes that looked upon these uncharted seas from caravel or galleon. Again, they meet with queer relics of armour and furnishing. There was a witch-doctor on Malaita, slain in a punitive raid in '12, who wore a morion of Philip the Most Catholic King, and went to battle with a Toledo blade.

Such yarns were currency to Lem and Mac. They knew of the early voyages. They had heard bar-room versions of the disaster that overtook Mendaña in the Santa Cruz—his death, the dispersal and sufferings of his colonists, and the subsequent wanderings of his pilot, Pedro de Quiros. In a way they had succeeded to those adventurers, to the ruthless spirit and the ruthless assumptions of those bold conquistadors who first felt the lure of the Pacific. In a way they were inheritors, and they went about to collect their rights.

Mac prodded into something the third day thereafter.

"Come across here!" he called. His iron control was not good enough to keep the hoarse quaver from his voice. As Lem surged the empty cradle to him, "This looks like the ticket!" he said.

Hip-deep they could feel a rounded hummock in the sandy bottom. It occupied approximately the wide part of the vessel's frame amidships—just the place a bulky cargo should be stowed, just the position to which their plans had been tending. They scooped and churned until their shovels rang oddly.

"Coral?"

"Too hard."

"Rock ballast?"

"Too solid," affirmed Mac.

Actually it seemed they had their trove. They made out the corrugations of some metallic surface. A chest would have suited them. A kettle full of doubloons might have met their fancy, or a heap of rough-cast bars. For that moment they tasted triumph as they scraped with foot and finger nail, and at last uncovered a narrow pyramid shape and groped along the length of it.

"Guns!" spluttered Hedrick. "Oh, the rotten luck! Nothing but three blinkin' old sunken guns! Is this the fine lay you brought us to?"

"Well, it's a lead, ain't it?" defended Mac. "It shows we're on the straight, anyhow. We'll have to move these things," he added.

"Move 'em your ruddy self!" flared Lem, and cursed him in an acid spurt that drove the blood from Mac's leathery cheek.

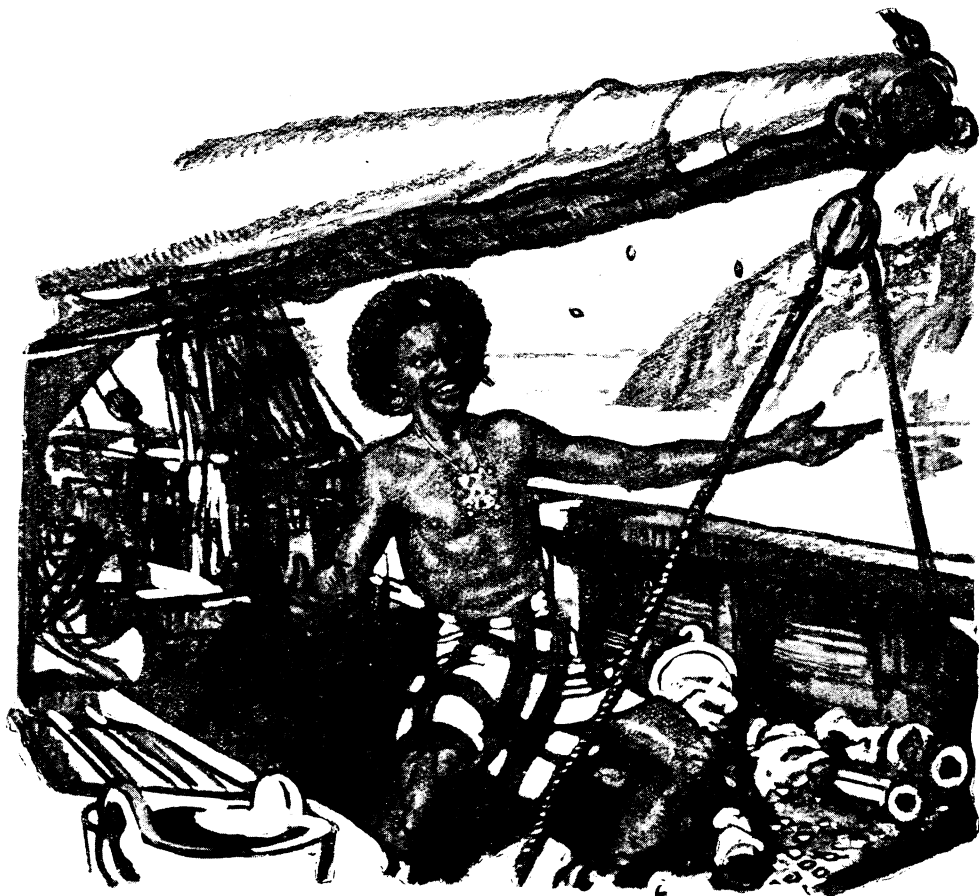
But the big fellow had a grip on himself. He turned doggedly to the task without

answering. It was plain he had stated the fact. They could probe no further until these guns were lifted.

Long and long they sweated; many weary hours, while sunset grilled the cove with saffron; and later by a moon that paled above them like a waning promise.

The old Spanish cannon were too firmly bedded to be budged without tackle, and that meant they must drag the cutter up and warp her through the mud and rig a purchase from her boom. They nearly tore out her rickety little windlass by the roots before the first load rose dripping from its berth of centuries. Thereafter they slung up the other two and got them stored side by side on deck, and then proceeded to pitch into the remaining portion of the wreck in a fury of haste and greed and apprehension.

Jackwo helped them. He helped perforce. If they did not spare themselves, they spared him even less. They had him



"He would take a fistful of Mendaña's treasure and rub it between his palms and toss and juggle."

to set the slings and tail at the ropes, to haul out and dump the cradle, for neither gold digger would leave off digging. They cuffed him if he came too close and cursed him if he went too far. He obeyed, of course, as he always did. Probably he knew white masters well enough to know that he went in this moment with his life between his teeth. But it could have meant very little to him; he must have had such moments and such masters before.



"The dying men watchel through an interval; the gilt-haired man and the silver-haired man watched the gun-metal man."

Like grotesque marine animals, like dim forms of condemned monsters, grubbing, floundering, sobbing of breath, they toiled on. It was back-breaking work, heart-breaking work, done blindly in the half light, done awkwardly, clumsily, savagely, because they were verging toward a crisis they could only postpone by frenzied, insensate effort. It continued until all three were wrung pithless, until the tools slipped from their hands and they crawled over the cutter's rail, exhausted, and fell and slept where they fell.

When the whites stirred next morning, they were wakened by



cheerful, customary clatter. In the galley Jackwo was already making music with his breakfast pans. The sun stood high, like a spot inside a blue porcelain bowl. Among the trees sounded the thin, shrill gossip of tropic bird life. A welcome waft of breeze brought spices of dew-fed jungle growths and set the cove twinkling like a faceted sapphire on an emerald girdle. It was a marvellous morning, the sort they had had ever since coming to Nbandi. Nothing was changed—and yet everything was changed. By its pure brilliance they took stock of what the night had left them.

Overside they could command the whole shell of the wreck. Through the water they could see how they had emptied its open hull from end to end. It was cleared out. Not a corner was left to explore; not a possible hiding-place remained. And they had nothing from it—nothing to show for their venture but the salvaged relics lying there at their feet on the deck.

They could examine them now. Just three old guns, of the type known as falcons, possibly. Just three mud-smearred cylinders of gun-metal which, when the incrustations had been cleaned away, might fetch some trifling price as curios in a museum. Lem Hedrick kicked at them idly, without apparent feeling.

"Call it fifty pound for the lot—if we could find anybody to buy—and that's our fortune."

His tone was curiously level, detached, like that of a somnambulist. He started to tighten his belt. At the same time Mac's fist closed on the shaft of a long-handled spade leaning against the rail. He replied in the same note, flat and colourless, though with a certain quickness, too: "But there's still another chance. We ain't beat yet. We got to study out every chance to miss nothin.'"

Each avoided looking at the other directly.

"What kind of a chance?" queried Lem.

Mac pointed out reasonably how they were bound to carry their search ashore. They had proved the Spanish map. Perhaps those seekers from Manila had moved the treasure themselves. Perhaps it might be waiting in full sight among their graves on the cliff.

Lem considered a space, and nodded.

So again they dodged the issue, and again they went on their mission together. They waded in through the mangroves. Up beyond, the ground rose steeply; they had a hard struggle to win the top. But it

became evident they were helplessly at fault. In this rich basaltic soil the vegetation thrived with hothouse vigour. It must have wiped out all traces of their predecessors with a vast green sponge. For they found no graves—and they found no treasure.

"We're done," said Lem Hedrick then.

He had reached the upper rock ridge. From there his gaze sought the horizon, the far line of the Pacific that bounded his hopes, and always had bounded them, a prison to which he was sentenced anew. Whatever his need, whatever the story of his past that had hunted him out as a failure and an exile, it came back to rend him now; it twisted his face with the torture of rage and despair.

"We're done! Account of you and your silly schemes. You muttonhead! You lop-eared flat!"

"Steady on!" growled Mac.

But Lem spun round and screamed a vile name. . . . These men had made a compact against success; they had forgotten to make one against ruin. They might have stood prosperity. They could not stand the bitterness of defeat. They were trembling, fevered, frayed out in nerve and fibre, and the weakness of the potential criminal, which has betrayed so many combinations of their sort, tripped them here past all provision. They spat at each other like crouching wild beasts.

"Do you talk to me?" roared McFhee. "No water-front slush can call me that. I ought never 'a' brought you. I ought 'a' known you for a dirty little quitter!"

It was the inevitable break. Lem made his gesture with a speed of light. But Mac was forewarned. Lem had hardly touched his knife when the big fellow caught him a clip with the edge of the spade—a terrible blow that slashed deep just above the shoulder. He went reeling back, drenched in a crimson flood. A tree kept him from falling, and, bracing there, before Mac could swing up his weapon again, he threw. A flicker like the dart of a dragon-fly, a sound like the plump punching of a melon rind, and McFhee rocked on his feet with eyes and mouth opened in ludicrous amazement, while he fumbled stupidly for the knife-handle that nestled close under his ribs.

For a time there was no further movement, no word between the two men on the cliff, as if by incredulous immobility in the peace and warmth and dazzle, by silent

sharing in the tropic vehemence of life all about them, they might presently restore themselves. It seemed impossible to die at such an instant in such a place. Yet they were dying. Lem had slipped down by the tree, feebly stanching with a reddened hand against his almost dissevered neck. Mac was crumpled on the rock ledge, trying to catch a painful breath. He spoke first.

"You—got me, Lem. But I—got you too. Didn't I get you?" He had an odd, dispassionate anxiety about it.

"I reckon you did," agreed Lem shortly. Mac philosophised.

"Just like Whitey Edwards and his pals. Just like the Spanisher gang. Gentlemen adventurers, d'y' see? Bound to count each other out. Nobody left but the Chinymen or the nigger." He gave a grimace. "That nigger—pretty slick for him. He'll snaffle the dinghy later, and he'll sail back to his own island on his own business. Likely he'll take our two heads for souvenirs. Pretty valyble, ours ought to be, Lem. D'you think he'll take our heads along with him?"

"Yes," said Hedrick. "Yes, I reckon he will. Can you see him down yonder, from where you are?"

"No."

"Try; it's worth it."

A certain urgency in his voice impelled Mac to try. With an effort he wriggled over a little so as to share Lem's angle. They stared over the edge of the cliff. The cove lay spread before them like the painted depth of a stage set, and there they had a full view of their cutter at her moorings just below. And there on the deck they had a full view of Jackwo, their roustabout, their helper, their monkey man.

He had finished with his breakfast lay-out apparently. While the smoke rose

lazily from the galley pipe, he had cast about for amusement. He had lighted on the guns—the old Spanish guns. He had been prying at them, monkeying about them in his usual irresponsible way. He had dug away the stopper of mud and rotted tampion from a muzzle. And now he had found something to occupy him. With both hands he was throwing rouleaus of gold pieces out over the water.

A cloud of parrakeets and kingfishers swept from shore to shore, a vortex of bright green and cobalt and crimson specks. Among them and over them shone a brighter rain of golden confetti, all in the driving sunshine.

Meanwhile Jackwo was having the fun of his life. He would take a fistful of Mendaña's treasure and rub it between his palms and toss and juggle. Then he would fling it with a wide sweep as high and as far as he could, laughing and whooping and dancing for sheer cosmic joyousness.

The dying men watched through an interval; the gilt-haired man and the silver-haired man watched the gun-metal man, as white men always have watched the unguessable activities and capacities of the inferior race.

Lem made his last comment, half choking.

"He will—I reckon he will take our heads. Why not? You know what they do with 'em before they smoke 'em, Mac? They take the brains out!"

Something of the spirit of the old conquistadors belonged to these ruffians; something they inherited of the grim humour that saves and perhaps has saved from utter perdition the whole crew of wanderers, pirates, and gold grabbers throughout the whole ironic history of the Pacific.

"Brains!" gasped McFhee. "Brains? Oh, hell!"

## ECSTASY.

**I WAS near heaven, but I held  
My heart still as a stone,  
I was by that strange vision spelled  
As I stood there alone.**

**I had no breath to breathe, but stood  
As one dead at his post;  
Nor no more speech to speak than would  
A shadow or a ghost.**

**Oh, if but now I could express  
The thing that held me then,  
Such speech would be than silence less  
Significant to men.**

**E. VINE HALL.**



"'That's torn it!'"

# THE MING JAR

By G. B. STERN and GEOFFREY HOLDSWORTH

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

"**N**O umpire would give a man out if he were bowled by a leg-break off the skirting-board," said I, glaring at Jimmy.

"And you call yourself a sportsman!" answered my brother-in-law. "My dear man, on an ordinary wicket there are worm-casts, caused by earthworms endeavouring to obtain oxygen. The careful batsman destroys these by means of a sharp tap with his bat. He also frequently causes severe headache to hopeful worms, though the R.S.P.C.A. usually has a man in the crowd to protect the interests of the little fellows. Well, the skirting-board is a worm-cast. I observed that you neglected to pat it. If, therefore, you are bowled by a leg-break off the skirting-cast—I mean worm-board—you are indubitably out, and my reply to your

protest is merely 'Faugh!' not to mention 'Ugh!'"

Jimmy and I were playing cricket in the passage of Four Roads Cottage, after having been told not to. It was a cold, wet, dreary afternoon, and Pat was walking three and a half miles through wind and rain to the nearest town to buy a corkscrew. We had now existed for five months and eight days at Four Roads Cottage without a corkscrew. We had removed corks with knitting-needles, hat-pins, skewers, penknives, violence, oaths, and auto-suggestion, but hitherto we had always forgotten to buy a corkscrew. To-day Pat had remembered the corkscrew, but forgotten that it was early-closing day.

"Aren't you two coming?" she had asked.

"No," Jimmy had replied firmly; "that is a woman's job. It is a man's job to wash the dog. Heaven speed you, my darling. To-night we will wassail."

But after she had gone, "What do you think?" I asked doubtfully. "Isn't Wednesday an unlucky day to wash dogs on?" Jimmy agreed, and gave his opinion, moreover, that Hamilton's dirt was really a protection against the weather, and that it would be cruel to bath him before the summer solstice. So we started playing cricket in the passage, and two hours slipped away like minutes. It was a drive of Jimmy's that cannoned off the grandfather clock, knocked a jar from its place in a shadowy niche over the cupboard, and smashed it to fragments.

"That's torn it!" And Jimmy glared savagely at the dog. "If that brute hadn't been so sensitive to nasal catarrh, we'd have been washing it now, and this wouldn't have happened. Oh, well, I suppose two-and-eleven will put it right."

And then, like Nemesis, Pat's key was heard to grate in the front door. Hamilton, his conscience clear, bounded to meet her.

"Hullo, old boy! Wasums nice clean dog, then? . . . H'm!"—with a swift change of voice. "Was it modesty, Ken dear, that made you hide Hamilton's new whiteness under Hamilton's old blackness, lest perchance I should praise you for it?"

"That's right—always blame me for not washing Jimmy's dog! As a matter of fact, it's the Rugger season, and it was solely to spare your feelings, and because you had asked us not to——" I thought I was being rather skilful in leading up to confession like this. But Pat guessed at once.

"You've been playing cricket in the passage, and you've smashed something. You're a pair of lazy, clumsy louts."

Jimmy, with a pained expression, held up one hand in protest. "Not louts. I must beg you, Patricia, to withdraw that offensive expression. We merely——" But suddenly Pat caught sight of the fragments of the jar on the passage floor, and let loose the sort of blood-curdling shriek that they must have given when they found the remains of the "Mistletoe Bough" bride in the old oak chest.

"The Ming jar! And I'd thought they'd put it safely away. Oh, boys, you *haven't* broken that?"

"What a silly thing to say!" quoth Jimmy in disgust. "It's like saying, 'Hullo, missed your train?' to someone

you see dashing up the platform as it goes out. Of course we broke it."

"You broke it," I said hastily.

"Not at all. You most unfairly pitched your ball on a worm-cast. If you'd read 'Little Eddy's Sacrifice' in the proper spirit, you'd have told Pat by now that it was more your fault than mine, and then you'd have been ready for the death-bed scene."

"I say, boys, don't joke. This is really serious." My sister was sitting on the floor, with the broken bits on her lap. She was looking rather white. "This jar—it's something very special and good. Genuine Ming, I think Miss Verity called it. She pointed it out when we were going over things with the inventory man, and I begged her to put it away, and never noticed that she hadn't. It's so awfully dark up in that corner. Now"—her tones were ominous—"we shall have to pay for it."

Jimmy's mouth twisted slightly. The common exchequer was in a rotten state, I knew. "What's it worth, d'you think?"

"About forty or fifty pounds, at a rough estimate, if it was real good stuff," I said.

"Then we shall have to plank down that much to the Veritys in three weeks' time, when our lease is up, and they go over the inventory, and we have the gas, telephone, and coal bills to pay, plus the price of cleaning that bit of carpet which Hamilton always uses as the English Channel," Pat quavered. "However, thank goodness, the Veritys are pals of ours, and like us. I expect they'll let us off lightly."

And, you know, this was the sort of thing we had to put up with from Pat. She was absolutely insensitive to the finer shades. I could see, of course, that Jimmy was as horrified as I over her barbarous notion of appealing to the Veritys' friendship, and as he'd only been her husband for six months, and I'd been her brother as long as I could remember, I just held my peace, and waited to see how he would tackle her.

"My dear girl, don't you realise that it's just *because* our landlord is a personal friend of ours that we can't possibly ask him the very smallest favour?"

"Meaning that if he'd been a personal enemy, we could have asked him the very largest?" inquired Pat, always pert.

Jimmy and I exchanged mutually sympathetic glances, which agreed that hers was a hopeless case.

"Yes, an absolute heathen," my brother-in-law remarked. "Neolithic, I should think

—not even that; probably a sub-species of *pithecanthropus erectus*—or perhaps a lemur. The lemurs are notoriously lacking in a sense of honour."

But Pat remained unchastened. "If being a lemur means that one did not spend six of the best years of one's life at an insanitary monastery called a public school, learning all the things that a fellow can't possibly do, then I'm very glad I *am* a lemur. Meanwhile, about this jar."

In lofty silence Jimmy stalked into the kitchen. In still loftier silence he returned again with a tube of some sticky stuff. Silently he applied the same to the edges of the fragments; painfully and messily he pressed them together.

"There!"—triumphantly, placing his completed effort in front of Pat. "The Veritys will probably never discover that it's been broken."

The jar smiled and collapsed into bits.

"Sorry," said Pat, "I shouldn't have breathed. I tried not to, but Nature was too strong for me."

Now, my strong point is inspiration. Jimmy is unrivalled at routine staff-work, but mine is the creative brain. Here we were in a predicament. I followed my usual method. What would Raffles have done, or Napoleon, or Dr. Frank Crane?

"Look here, you two, there's nothing for it but to go out and seek our fortunes—quite seriously, I mean. A grievous accident has befallen us; we've got to produce, say, fifty pounds by the end of March, and our bank balances have been sapped of all their vitality by payment of the final instalment of our rent the other day. Now, I believe we can act more strongly separately than in unison. Each time we've acted in unison someone has blundered—usually Pat. We won't tell each other what we're going to do."

"I'm going to have a sale of work," exclaimed Jimmy, with enthusiasm, "and sell what-me-nots and fiddle-de-dees. It's true I'm not a church window or Armenians, but I'm quite a worthy object, all the same. And—no, I'm not," he went on, getting more and more excited. "I shall go to the Laccadive Islands and collect the eggs of the Bungo!"

"Don't try to be funny," scoffed Pat. "There's no such thing as a Bungo, and, if there is, it doesn't lay eggs."

"There is. And the Swiss Family Robinson constantly ate its eggs when they wanted a change from caviare and homard

thermidor. It's a cross between the flamingo and the pterodactyl, and its eggs are used for making tooth-brush handles. A perfectly sound commercial proposition, you see. A decent steam-yacht, a few pounds of glass beads to barter with the natives—thank Heaven, I kept my spurs and my revolver when I was demobbed. I'll only want about twenty thousand pounds capital. Hades! I'd forgotten about that." Jimmy subsided weakly.

We talked far into the night—fairly far, that is. And before we parted, it had been decided, quite soberly and without fireworks, that we should indeed each seek a separate stunt by which to earn the price of the Ming jar.

Pat reminded us of that story in Grimm's fairy tales in which two brothers separate to seek their fortunes, and stick a knife in a tree, with one blade pointing east and the other west. "And if either wanted to know how the other fared—don't you remember?—he came back, and if his brother's blade was bright, all was well with him."

"And if it was rusty, he'd got cirrhosis of the liver, and if there was blood on it, he was dead. Yes, I remember. And I remember wondering which end the handle was if there were blades at both ends, and how they got it through the tree, and all sorts of charming, wistful, childish speculations like that."

"Yes, and now that there are three of us, it makes it more complicated still. We'll have to use that old pocket-knife of mine with the thing for taking stones out of horses' hoofs in it—that can be you, Jimmy, and Pat can be the nail-file. We'll stick it into the front door. But don't get spasms. Pat, if you should come back and find the me-blade rusty. There are such things as dew and rain."

"We'll meet under the nail-file, then," said Pat, "a fortnight from to-day, and produce our spoils, and tell our adventures. If we *each* bring back fifty pounds, then there'll be a hundred over for us to blue, and that'll be rather jolly!"

"Sanguine child!" said Jimmy indulgently, patting her head.

## II.

DAWN was breaking in saffron and gold on the eastern horizon when Jimmy went south, and Pat went north, and I went—for a short walk up the lane and round the garden and back again to Four Roads Cottage. It was useless for me to go and

dig for gold in the Yukon, or even to hold horses' heads in the Strand; the only way in which I had ever succeeded in extracting lucre from an ungrateful world, so far, had been by caricaturing the great. I had rather a brilliant and original idea for a series of such caricatures, so I rang up my favourite editor and poured my suggestion into his unwilling right ear. When I'd finished, he said expectantly, "Yes?" with an upward inflection and a question-mark.

"That is the idea," I replied, in as velvety tones as my irritation would muster. "I mean, there's no more to come."

"Oh—well, let me see them when you've done 'em. Of course, I'm not using many caricatures just now."

"Commissioned work is as meat to the belly of a beggar, but the procrastinating editor draweth the tongue like limejuice," I replied.

At the word "limejuice" my favourite editor shuddered audibly and rang off. "Bismillah!" I murmured. "Likewise, Eyewallah!"

For ten days I laboured. On the eleventh I uprose, girt myself in my newest lounge suiting, and betook myself to Babylon that great city. My favourite editor—and, for aught I know, I might have been his favourite contributor; he never said anything to the contrary—looked at my drawings and said they were fine. Then he said he didn't want them. That's the way artists live.

I walked down the Strand again, feeling desperate and ready for anything. The fourteen days were almost up, and the thought of abasing myself to a triumphant Jimmy and Pat, and confessing that I hadn't made a penny towards paying for the Ming jar, was exceedingly distasteful. I went in the direction of Soho in search of lunch, and paused outside the famous "L'Oiseau Bleu." Stuck to the window was a half-sheet of paper, announcing that the management required the services of a waiter instantly. The notice cannot have been up for longer than two and a half seconds at the utmost, or it would have been taken down by now. There are at least four hundred and nineteen constantly unemployed waiters to every one job in Soho; or perhaps St. Otolph—whom my diary states to be my special patron—had laid a spell upon the eyes of all the Soho waiters who were out of a job.

My notion of applying may sound fantastic, but I had to do something showy and eccentric, not so much for the few

pounds which it would contribute to our fund, as for the sake of my reputation with my sister and brother-in-law. Remember, too, that the next day was the usual date of the monthly dinner, held at "L'Oiseau Bleu," of the Lorenzo Club—better known, perhaps, as the Rich Young Noodles' Club. The Lorenzo Club was composed of pale young ladies and gentlemen whose purses were more capacious than their brainpans, and whose special forte was to discover rotting genius, and, so to speak, to unrot it with the sunshine of their benevolent patronage. I had never been to one of these dinners, where the prodigy of the moment performed; but Pat had, several times, and had given me marvellous descriptions. The members were, I knew, likely to be very generous with their tips.

It was a curious display of the bizarre way in which my luck was running that day, that my interview with the proprietor of the restaurant was more successful than my previous interview with my favourite editor.

\* \* \* \* \*

These are the scraps of talk I heard as the various members of the club drank their cocktails. The tendency of the Lorenzos was more Bacchanalian than teetotal; they were the type who enjoyed verses about "lips deep-stained with ruby juice. . . ." When I was a kid, and got my lips deep-stained with anything, I was sent upstairs to wash them.

"So Van Kuyvar's bringing him tonight?"

"I never *can* pronounce his name. Is it Pwlcwz or Blwsk?"

"We'll ask him. D'you know"—this was from an excited lady Noodle—"it may be queer of me, but I always think of him as a centaur—half man and half horse! I suppose it's because he comes from the Caucasus."

This centaur business opened up boundless possibilities. In my menial capacity I had to be prepared for everything. How did centaurs sit down to dinner, for instance? Or if the other end of him, the eating end, proved to be a horse, ought I to get a bran mash ready?

More members drifted in. They were all very worked up over the latest discovery, whom apparently none of them had yet seen. They had only been fired to their present enthusiasm by the accounts given of this mad, brilliant, wayward poet of the Caucasus by one Van Kuyvar, who, I

gathered, specialised in the discovering-of-rotting-genius business, and had brought his deathless works to the notice of the ever-credulous Noodles. To-night, however, Squelch, or whatever he was called, had been promised to them in person, and even the

here often in her unregenerate days ; but her companion was unknown to me. He was an elderly man, very distinguished-looking, with a white imperial and a singularly sensitive face. Beautifully dressed, he was obviously not an English-



"Enter, then, a beaver—a tall old man with humped shoulders and a heavy stick . . .  
The President looked disconcerted."

visitors were infected by the buzz of expectancy.

Among these latter was Pat.

Of course there was nothing miraculous about this. As I said before, she had been

man ; indeed, a few minutes later I heard Pat introduce him to Cyril de Baggle, one of the rich young Noodles, as Prince Something-or-other. "It was so good of you to let us come to-night of all nights," she added.

Meanwhile I moiled. Moiled, I think, is the word.

My sister recognised me. If it had been a musical comedy, she wouldn't have, because I was wearing a greasy evening suit and an expression of patient servitude; but, to her credit, she penetrated these disguises, and gave me a cool flicker of recognition from the tail of her left eye as she passed. She was looking particularly pretty in a new frock. When women are in desperate need of money, and have to

President of the Lorenzo Club took a step forward.

Enter, then, a beaver—a tall old man with humped shoulders and a heavy stick, clad mainly in a rusty black coat and hair, much more like Rip Van Winkle than the centaure of the Lady Noodle's expectations. For some reason he was without his bear-leader. The President looked disconcerted. Mr. Van Kuyvar ought to have been present to smooth any little difficulties of nationality; it was



"The Noodles were in ecstasy."

earn it by hook or by crook, they always begin with a morning's shopping in Sloane Street.

At this point there should have been a fanfare of trumpets. An electric vibration, quivering upwards from the restaurant downstairs, announced the imminent arrival of the evening's sensation. The

obvious that the President was not sure whether to address his guest as Mr., Herr, Signor, or the Caucasian equivalent.

The venerable beaver was the first to break the awkward silence.

"Mr. Van Kuyvar he no come. He have



—how you call it?—a sick of the stomaski. Pouf! I care not. I fear nozzing.—nozzing. I am Caucasian. *Vrashti shto nyar!*”

Pat's Prince looked at him with serious interest.

The bard slapped his chest and, I regret to say, spat noisily on to the floor. The Noodles were in ecstasy. I could see that Prwlez was an instantaneous success. Amidst fraternal murmurings they all sat down at the table, and I began to moil.

It was after the soup and before the fish that my ear caught certain faint inflections in the booming voice of the poet that seemed vaguely familiar. Thereafter I gave this phenomenon rather too much of my fascinated attention, with the result that I ladled butter sauce into a Noodle's champagne-glass instead of over the sole Lorenzo, and was sharply reprimanded by the head waiter.

“Zis great city, it is terrible—terrible! No mountains, no wolves. I stay in my little room, close under ze roofski, and dar I dream—I dreama of ze four walls of my little troika. I veel tell you about my troika, you mit de faces zat understand.”

*Jimmy!*

It was the troika that gave him away. We'd often tried to make Jimmy understand that Russians did not live in troikas; they drove in them. He knew two other words—samovar and doushka. Presently, no doubt, these would be brought in. Meanwhile, what did he hope to get out of this? Had Pat tumbled to it, or was she part of the scheme? She was paying more attention to the Prince than to the utterings of the pseudo-Caucasian. The Noodles, however, hung on his every word. He kept on turning the talk to his little grey troika in the West, and how savagely he longed to return thereunto. But—he had not the fare. . . .

So that was it! Quite bright! Nor could anyone accuse him of deliberate dishonesty as he vehemently insisted that he would leave behind his entire poetical works as a gift to the Lorenzo Club, for them to use as they thought best for posterity. The Lorenzo Club was enchanted. It seemed that the mysterious Van Kuyvar had already shown them a few rough translations of these Caucasian masterpieces, and there was something altogether new and delectable about them.

Presently, in response to repeated invitations, Prwlez consented to declaim his latest inspiration. Dinner had reached the

cigar and liqueur stage, and there was to me an air of nightmare about the rapt faces of the Noodles swaying through the eddying smoke towards the grotesque and shaggy figure at the bottom of the table, while I rushed and stumbled about with bottles and glasses. Several Noodles, indeed, were approaching a state of Bacchic frenzy.

Prwlez beat thrice on the table with his stick, smashing a glass each time. Then he began to speak:

“I now tell you vot vos ze var-song of my tribe, ze Vodkas. It is vinter, ze volves howl—waaow! Ze var-drums are beating—pomski, pomski, pomski! Under ze light of ze moon ve march away to fight for our beloved country. Ve leave ze vimmen—pah! Ve leave ze children—psk! To-night our swords vill drink ze blood of our enemies—ya, aha!

Ze vind howls in ze mountains!

Yarravouski! Yarravouski!

Ze Vodkas are marching!

Yarravouski! Aha!

Zey vill kill till zey are tired of blood—

Zey vill bite ze noses of zeir enemies!

Zey vill stamp upon ze faces of zeir mozzier-in-laws!

Ya pinski samovar! Doushka yaha!!!”

The bard, his beard wagging with excitement and emotion, paused at the end of his first stanza.

“Magnificent!” murmured the President of the Noodles. “How austere! How vital! How the words throb with the burning soul of Caucasia!”

“In ze next verse ze audience must join in. Ven I howl, you howl; ven I stamp, as I have stamp upon my enemies, you stamp. Ze Vodkas are rushing to battle! Aha!

Blood upon ze snow,

Blood in our eyes,

Ze Vodkas rush in battle!

Ya Vodka pinski pelikoff

Varanji! Aha!”

The frantic poet stamped, and the Noodles stamped with him:

“Ve vill eat zeir livers!

Ve vill dice wiz zeir eyeballs!

Ve vill throb zeir noses to ze volves!

Ya waaaaaooow!!!”

Even the palest lady Noodle howled fervently:

“Shtampede ze cattles!

Burn ze houses!

Kill all ze children!

Capture ze vimmens!

Ya Vodka parovski!

Ya doushka Tschaikowsky!!

Ya pinski xjinsky!!!

Ya suchakoff binski!!!!

Vodka, Vodka! Alaska Yaha!”

James Felton Prwlez sat down amidst

thunders of applause, and an eager hum of conversation began. Pat's Prince, whose name, I had discovered, was Prince Melikoff, was presented by Cyril de Bagglely to his unfortunate and gifted fellow-countryman.

"It is wiz great pleasure zat I make your acquaint," said Prwlez uneasily.

"I, too, am very glad to have the pleasure of meeting you. As you come from Caucasia, you are, of course, familiar with the city of Tiflis."

"I know it like my thumb," said Prwlez.

"Ah! Years ago I was stationed there with my regiment, the eleventh Cossacks, and I had a lodging in the Nadya Square—you know it?"

Prwlez roared with Homeric laughter at the mere idea of not knowing the Nadya Square.

"I had two little rooms above the shop of a saddler, just opposite the Church of St. Catherine."

"That would be Nikolas Passevitch's shop. He is an old friend of mine."

"Indeed?"—courteously. Then Prince Melikoff turned to old Grimshaw, the President of the club. "I regret to have to inform you, sir—and you, ladies and gentlemen—that this man is an impostor. There is no Nadya Square in Tiflis, nor is there a Church of St. Catherine, nor a saddler's shop opposite. This person's tribe does not exist. His Russian is not Russian——"

"Nor," said Jimmy, realising with a certain impudent grace that the game was up, "is his beard his own!" And he neatly peeled it off.

"Jimmy!" cried Pat, aghast. She had not recognised him before.

I felt that the situation needed covering. My family was in sore straits. So, with a crash, I dropped a tray loaded with bottles and glasses.

### III.

LATE that same evening three morose and dishevelled figures stood outside the door of Four Roads Cottage. The penknife with the broken blade, the nail-file, and the instrument for getting stones out of horses' hoofs was still stuck in the panel, and all these emblems were thick with rust. No sacrilegious tradesman had disturbed it.

"They probably thought we were the Ku-Klux-Klan," said Jimmy, for the first time breaking through the grim silence which had hung about him ever since we left "L'Oiseau Bleu." Not often was he out of temper, but now it had happened,

it was of an overwhelming magnitude and blackness, which compelled our timid respect.

"Have either of you got any money?" he continued, after we had entered our abode. "Where's the fifty pounds, Pat? Have you brought it home with you, Ken?"

Miserably we admitted that we hadn't.

Jimmy glowered. "Neither have I—not a blessed penny." And he strode off to bed without another word.

At breakfast next morning it was obvious that the storm had cleared. Jimmy attacked his bacon and eggs with his wonted vigour, and was full of sunny talk.

"Well, well," he cried gaily, "the best of friends must meet. I liked that bluey-green affair you were wearing last night, Pat, my darling. And Ken's waistcoat, too, was delightfully savoury. I remember crashing my nose into it as I was endeavouring to escape after he had so thoughtfully dropped those bottles. Suppose you tell us how you came to be present at my celebrated impersonation of Prwlez, the Pride of the Vodkas?"

My narrative did not last long. I concluded it with a bitter retrospect of the tips I might have received, and most certainly had earned by the sweat of my brow——

"Yes, I noticed it in the soap," quoth Jimmy in parentheses.

"—if Pat had not made such an ill-judged selection for her escort, and caused me to drop bottles, and be dismissed before tipping-time."

Jimmy was thoroughly sympathetic: "Really, you know, we'd have done better to have left Pat out of this altogether. I'd have had my full fare to the Caucasus by now if she hadn't pitched on a Russian, of all people? An Eskimo, now, wouldn't have mattered a bit. And, by the way, who was your aristocratic friend, my pretty one?"

"I had to do something," Pat defended herself, "and the sybaritic luxury of being wife to one James has unfitted me for dock labouring. I went up to Molly's place and asked her to put me up for a few nights; and then at once I stuck an advertisement in the personal column of *The Day*, stating that an experienced courier was prepared to conduct people round the intimate Bohemian haunts of London. I thought it would fetch the New Rich, you see. But Prince Melikoff was the first to answer, and he engaged me for a week, at a fiver a day, the whole sum"—with a bitterness that

more than equalled mine and Jimmy's—"to have been paid at the end of the engagement, which would have been to-morrow. And he was an old dear, too—awfully keen on modern poetry, and art, and that sort of thing. That's why I picked out the Lorenzo Club Dinner as my Bohemian treat for last night. I thought it would be so suitable." And Cyril de Baggle got us in, for old times' sake. It certainly did *not* occur to me"—and Pat's voice took on a touch of reproachful dignity—"that my brother and my husband would both be present to disgrace me, though I never spotted you, Jimmy, till you unbearded."

I thought Pat had been talking long enough, so I asked Jimmy to clear up the mystery of the unknown Mr. Van Kuyvar who had introduced him to the Lorenzo Club.

He beamed upon us. "Lo, I am the blade of grass and the dewdrop upon the blade, and the sky, and the 10.13 to Town, and the oneness and the allness and Mr. Van Kuyvar as well as the Caucasian Bard. Yea, I myself the Whole Boiling! When I departed to seek my fortune, I first tried to think of all the rich people I knew, and then realised that they all knew me, so *that* wouldn't do! Then, like a flash, by association with the word 'rich,' I remembered some of Pat's imitations of the Lorenzo Club, and her account of how free they used to be with their boodle. Belonging as I do to the honourable profession of the Bar, I was unknown to those dilettantes of Art, and therefore perfectly safe in calling on old Grimshaw, disguised solely in a pair of horn spectacles and an American accent. I told him I'd discovered a vurry remarkable praaposition; and he jumped to it. I poured out a lot of uplift about the starving poet longing to get back to his home town, and the next day I visited him again with two or three samples of the said poet's barbaric genius in my best pidgin Russian. I promised to trot him round to their next dinner. Meanwhile I kept them interested by little anecdotes of his charming shy ways—how he used to bite my little finger, and other pretty human touches. The Rich Young Noodles hadn't had a treat like that for years. When the night arrived, I beaverised myself and trotted round to the club, leaving poor Mr. Van Kuyvar sick of the stomaski, as I mentioned before. The sight of you and Ken, each in your puny way trying to make a killing, almost turned my beard white. However, as

we've all three neatly queered each other's pitch, let's be magnanimous, and forgive each other. There was a little question of a Ming jar, I believe?"

For a few moments the knowledge that we still were about fifty pounds short of a debt that we had incurred, and that our lease was up next week, rather damped our spirits. Suddenly Pat sprang to her feet.

"I don't care twopence about what's done, and what isn't done!" she cried. "I just know that I can't stand the thought of the settling-up coming nearer and nearer. I'm going to ring up the Veritys now, this minute, and tell them we've broken it. P'raps they'll be decent about it; p'raps—oh, at any rate, they'll *know*, and that's the main thing." And she took up the receiver and gave the Veritys' number with a defiant air.

Our landlord and his daughter, who always let Four Roads Cottage furnished for six months of the year, had a flat in Town, so we were able at any time to get into communication with them. They were the right sort of people; nevertheless, I felt distinctly uneasy while we sat about, waiting for the call to come through, and so, I could see, did Jimmy. A man who values old things is apt to be a little disturbed when he hears that an irreplaceable bit of porcelain, probably the gem of his collection, has gone west.

The bell tinkled. And I admired Pat's pluck, her jaunty tilt of the head, as she once again put the receiver to her ear:

"Hallo! Is this Park 902406? Can I speak to Miss Verity, please? Oh, it's Miss Verity speaking. Good morning! I'm Four Roads Cottage—yes, Pat Feltham. N-no, there's nothing wrong. . . ." Her voice trembled a little. Then out it all came with a rush. "Miss Verity, I'm most frightfully sorry, and I don't know what you're going to say to us, but we've broken your Ming jar, and we can't pay for it. You know, the one that stood in the hall—the one I asked you to put away, because it was so priceless. Oh, I wish you had. . . . What?" A long silence now, while Pat merely listened. Apparently Miss Verity was giving vent to her feelings at the other end. Jimmy's teeth gritted hard on the mouthpiece of his pipe. I guessed that he, like myself, was feeling a bit of a hog at leaving the dirty work to Pat. But what was this? . . . "Oh, I *am* so glad!" Pat's voice was one gurgle of rapturous relief. "Yes, yes—no, that is,

of course we will! Good-bye!" She hung up.

"Six months hard?" inquired Jimmy nonchalantly.

"No, dear, two-and-eleven. Miss Verity says that of course she put away the Ming Jar before we came in here. Only that niche looked rather empty, so she stuck up a dud jar in its place, of little beauty

and no value—just to fill up. But you needn't begin to grin, Jimmy; the moral lesson's the same."

I looked at Jimmy; Jimmy looked at me. "Raining again," he said. "Beastly weather we're having. I don't feel well enough to go up to Town this morning, so what about a little game of cricket, Ken? It's too wet to go out, but——"



## QUIET BEAUTY.

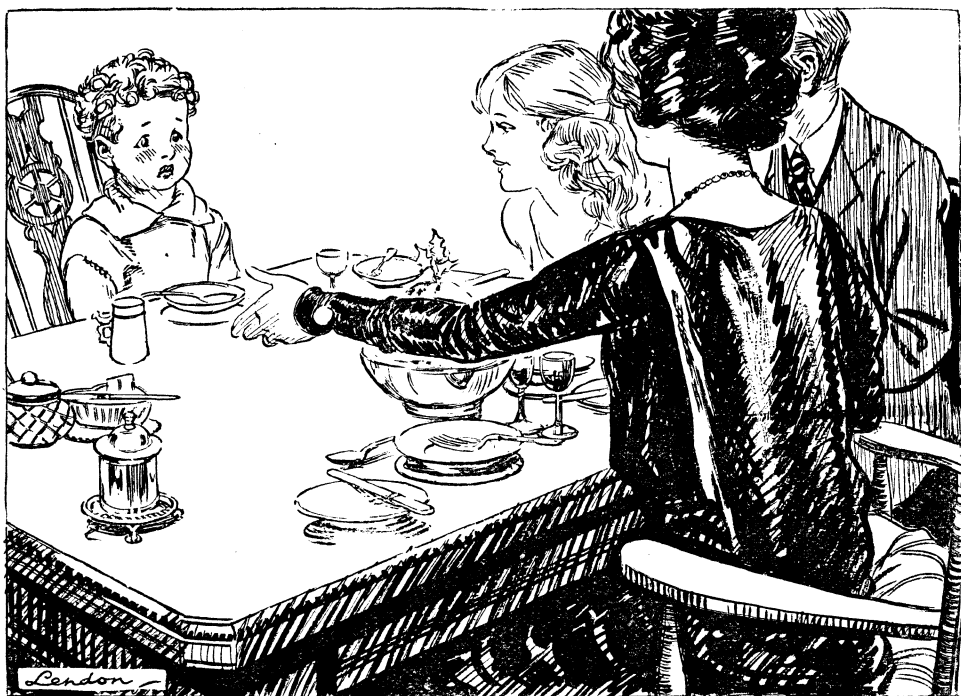
**S**MOOTH are a dove's grey wings,  
Her voice how sweet!  
Softly her wooer sings  
His love to tell;  
Silent are swans that steer  
With ebon feet  
Over a glassy mere  
Unfathomable.

Beauty of doves may go  
Alp-high unheard;  
Beauty of swans may glow  
On pits profound;  
Softly the wing may sweep,  
The foot be stirred,  
So that the sky, the deep  
Give back no sound.

Soft are her falling words,  
How few! How few!  
Faint as the flight of birds  
That fade in light.  
Swans adrift on a mere,  
Or doves that woo,  
Taken a thought less dear,  
A soul less white.

Soft are her two grey eyes,  
Her voice how soft!  
Lovely she seems, and wise,  
Whate'er she dons;  
Quiet she moves as wings  
That beat aloft,  
Smooth as a wave that brings  
The wandering swans.

WILFRID THORLEY.



RIISING TO THE OCCASION.

"CAN you eat some more pudding, Tommy?"  
 "Yes, please, if I may stand up."

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### WRITING TO THANK FOR CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

"CHILDREN, *have* you written yet to thank for your presents?"

How vividly the words recall the shock of reaction after the abandonment of Christmas!

I wonder, do the boys and girls of to-day go through the mental agonies endured by a previous generation over what we, as children, used paradoxically to call "thankworthy" letters.

If only we could have had a free hand in the matter, it mightn't have been so bad. But no! The amount of supervision, restriction, admonition and revision deemed generally necessary to the business would have served to turn out a completely new Book of Common Prayer. "I wish to goodness we might just put 'Thank you most awfully, Amen,' or something of that sort," I remember once having the temerity to remark, and being swiftly told that I didn't deserve any presents at all if that was how I felt about it. Yet I really did feel grateful, and wouldn't have minded saying so—in my own way.

Someone was sure to have received a box of fancy note-paper, and I have never forgotten how it went to one's heart when yet another

robin or rosebud or Kate Greenaway figure had to crumple up for the waste-paper basket. No wonder envelopes seemed to last for ever in those days!

There was, to begin with, always the awful problem of a suitable adjective for the special gift in question. Personally I have never quite got over my mortification at the ill success of "Thank you very much for the kind ten shillings." I still uphold the phrase as expressive and to the point, yet it somehow failed to pass the censor.

"Useful" was a splendid stand-by over which we used to wrangle like dogs over a bone. It was a sort of unwritten law that when writing to the same donor identical wording was not to be allowed.

"You can't say 'useful,' *I've* got that," a rapid writer would call out triumphantly.

"Oh, I say, you *are* mean! Five bob's a jolly sight more useful than a pin-cushion."

"I can't help that—I put it first." And the original speaker would plod on, tongue well to the fore.

"Mother, what *can* I put, then? It isn't 'pretty,' or 'lovely,' or anything of that sort. What *can* I call it?"

"Why not 'delightful'?"



"IF WINTER COMES—"

SHOWING AT A GLANCE THOSE ANIMALS WHICH ENJOY IT AND THOSE THAT DON'T.

"No, he can't have that—I've said that about my book." Another protesting voice. And so it would go on.

After the actual thanking, some news items had to come in. Here again was a danger of mortal combat. A list of one's presents was more or less tolerated on the score of variety of items, but after that ideas were apt to languish, and any lucky inspiration was jealously guarded.

motive in "Again thanking you" had many envious emulators. The identical words being, of course, taboo, we others racked our brains and rummaged the waste paper basket for suitable forms of paraphrase. "Once more my most cordial thanks" (culled from a letter acknowledging a hospital subscription) was firmly turned down as too patronising. And then I made my find. I pounced on some-

thing which seemed to me the very acme of originality and distinction as expressed, to the best of my recollection, in a wine merchant's advertisement circular. I copied the words down in feverish haste and managed miraculously to get my letter off without any further overlooking by the authorities.

I have often wondered since what my great-aunt thought of me when she arrived at the words "Thanking you in anticipation."

*Elaine Nicholson.*



JONES: What a strange way that man has of putting out his hands before him wide apart! Is he in the habit of telling fish stories?

SMITH: Oh, no, he is always holding skeins of wool for his wife.



READING the following lines from an account of a sports meeting in Essex, we can't help feeling that the reporter might have been a little more tactful:—

"Selections were

played by a military band, and members of St. John's Ambulance were in attendance."



A CONTEMPORARY states that football was invented by the Chinese. We have often wondered who was responsible, but it is too late to do anything about it now.



IN THE NATURAL COURSE OF THE SEASONS.

"HERE'S your lawn-mower I borrowed, Smith. Have you got such a thing as a snow shovel?"

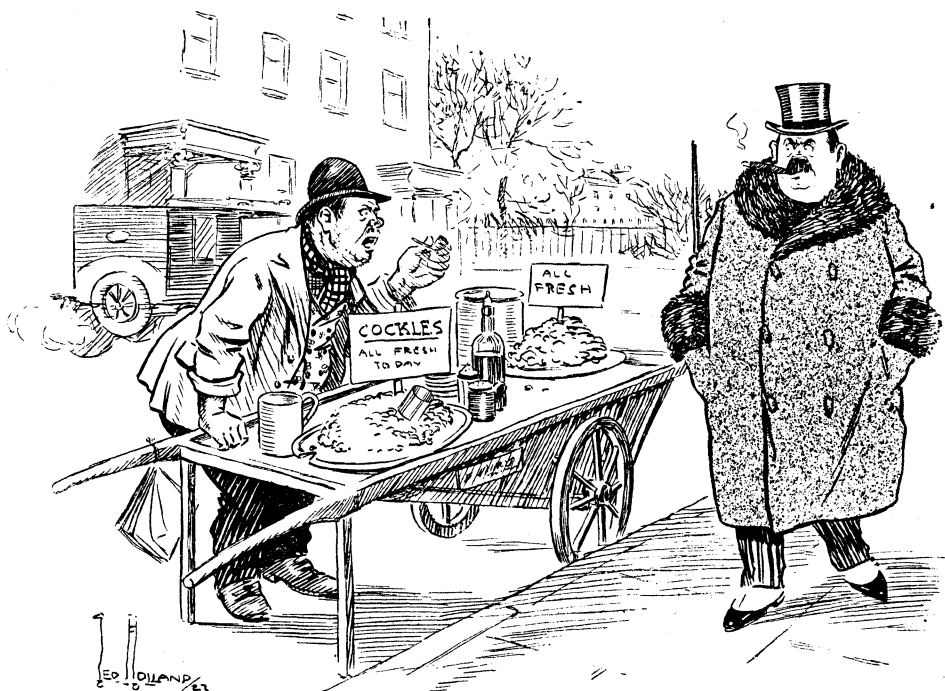
Not less than three pages represented the length regulations required, and I should mention that it was considered rather a shabby trick to spin out by means of a detailed list of greetings in the style of St. Paul.

But it was round the "ending-up" that the fiercest competition used to rage. The pioneer who introduced a graceful return to the chief



ANOTHER GUESS COMING.

"WHAT yer got in the bag, Jimmy?"  
 "'Ow'd yer know my name was Jimmy?"  
 "Guessed it in once."  
 "Well, then, guess what's in the bag."



THE WRONG PITCH.

COSTER (fed up after a blank day): Don't none of yer eat nothink round abaht 'ere?



# SAVED FOR THE NATION.

(Being extracts from a famous Newspaper.)

## Letter No. 1.

DEAR SIR,—Your paper has always been so patriotic in opening subscription lists for the collection of funds to retain pictures and books of national interest to the country, that I venture to ask you to be so good as to call upon the British Public to subscribe for the purchase of two most interesting and previously unknown letters of John Urbskith. There is at present every likelihood of these treasures leaving the country for America, and I think all lovers of the genius of Urbskith will agree

## Letter No. 2.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Brown's letter in your issue of yesterday, and your prompt opening of a subscription list to-day, should arouse the Government, and certainly the Public, to the terrible risk which the Nation is constantly running of losing from private collections articles of the most intense interest. In this connection I well remember entering an inn kept by a former servant of Thomas Carlyle. In a pen-tray was an old and broken penholder, which I was informed had come from Carlyle's house; but the nib in it was a new one. "And where," I asked, "do you keep the original nib?" The answer haunts me still: "Oh, that



## THE INEVITABLE INFERENCE.

WIFE (off for a visit): Well, good-bye, darling. I shall write you in the course of the week.  
HUSBAND: Good Heavens, Mary, you must make that cheque last longer than *that*!

that the very smallest thing connected with the life or work of that remarkable man is an object of national importance, and that it will be a public scandal if we allow these two letters to leave this country.

The letters, which were written to my grandfather, are in my hands; but my income does not justify me in refusing the offer which I have received for them from a well-known American connoisseur, unless the Nation is prepared to make me a more substantial offer in the course of the next week.

Yours truly,

A. BROWN.

was crossed-nibbed; my husband threw it away!"

That, sir, was a scandal which it was impossible to avert. But Mr. Brown has given us full warning, and it will be a lasting blot on the patriotism of the British Public if your subscription list does not save these two letters for our literary archives.

I regret that frequent calls upon my purse prevent me from sending you more than this expression of my opinion, and the little anecdote, which I hope will gain you many subscribers.

Your obedient servant,

B. JONES.



NO WONDER, REALLY.

"I WONDER why Percy isn't here to meet me."

*Extract from the famous Newspaper.*

# SAVED FOR THE NATION.

Discovery of unknown Urbskith letters.

We have the greatest pleasure in announcing that a munificent gift of £100 by the Urbskith Admiration Brotherhood, together

with the Government grant, has brought our subscription list up to the amount which Mr. Brown has patriotically consented to accept as the price for the recently discovered Urbskith letters. A representative of the British Museum will formally take possession of these treasures from Mr. Brown's hands to-morrow.

By the courtesy of the latter gentleman, we are enabled to publish the two letters *in extenso*.

*Letter A.*—Mr. John Urbskith will be glad if Mr. Brown will send him another gross of his quill toothpicks the same as before.

*Letter B.*—In answer to Mr. Brown's request, Mr. Urbskith would certainly object to his name being used as an advertisement for Mr. Brown's quill toothpicks.

In conclusion, we have to thank all those who have so generously and patriotically assisted towards purchasing for the Nation hitherto unknown relics of a great man. It is the preservation of such treasures among our national possessions that puts health and strength into the literary and artistic life of the country.

R. T. Lee.



### THE HOME HINTER.

#### New Style.

"WHAT a perfectly ripping china lamp you've got!" exclaimed Celia, when she called in the other evening. "I think it's too sweet for words! But what a frightful amount it must have cost!"

"Not at all," I said; "I made it myself for next to nothing."

"Oh, do tell me how!" she implored.

"Well, you just get a two-pound jam jar and paint a landscape on it, or, if you can't manage a landscape, try some simple design like noughts and crosses. Then buy one of those little sixpenny-halfpenny brass lamps and rest it in the jar, and make the shade out of two pink ham-frills. During the daytime you can remove the lamp and use the other part for a flower vase."

"You fearfully clever old thing!" gasped Celia. "I shall rush home at once and make half a dozen of them, as a surprise for George."



THE season for swimming across the Channel has now closed, but the man who was recently seen sitting on a camp-stool in a lonely spot on the South Coast is thought to be the head of the queue of next year's aspirants.

FATHER (scanning school report): I see you had twenty bad marks during last term.

SON: Well, that doesn't amount to much at the present rate of exchange.



Scene—Village post office. STRANGER: May I use the telephone?

POSTMISTRESS: I'm afraid it's out of order, sir. You see, Colonel Crusher left his golf clubs in the train yesterday, and he's just been telling the railway company about it.



CLOTHING SHOULD BEGIN AT HOME.

BENEVOLENT LADY: Didn't I give your father the money to buy a coat for you last week? I don't see you wearing it.

SMALL BOY: No, mum, 'e put it on a 'orse.

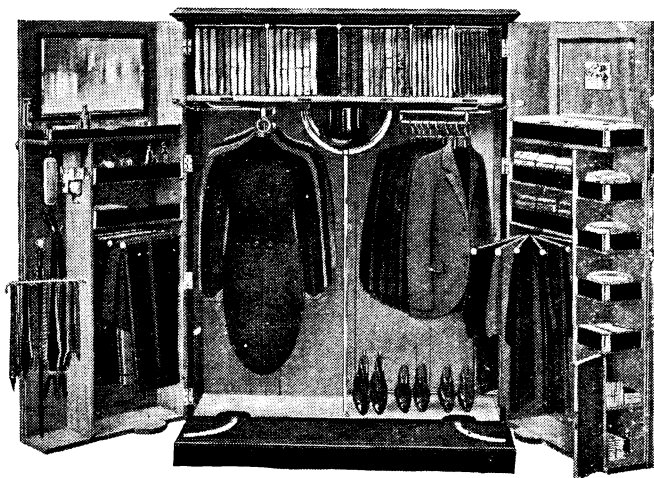
BENEVOLENT LADY: But he should think of your comfort before that of an animal.

"NOTHING," says an article, "can stop the upward progress of women." Except, perhaps, the hobble skirt, which we read is coming in again.



POMOLOGY, we read, is the science of garden fruits. Pompomology, of course, is the science of trombone playing.

# The Father of them All.



You can buy the Compactom Clothing Cabinet wherever really good furniture is sold.

## The Compactom Clothing Cabinet

We think you will eventually like to see our Catalogue. May we send one now?

Constructed of selected Mahogany or Oak throughout, the exteriors are finished in standard shades of Mahogany, Walnut or Oak, that will harmonise with any decorative scheme.

Overall dimensions : 4' 3" x 5' 7" x 1' 10".

To ensure perfect delivery, even where entrance space is limited, it is made in five portions.

The separate compartments are adjustable and adaptable to any quantity and kind of clothing.

Heavily plated fittings extend in such a manner as to make the clothing immediately accessible and always in view.

Every possible requirement is provided for in this Clothing Cabinet, which will preserve in properly proportioned compartments three times as much as any ordinary wardrobe.

### 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ Guineas.

Delivered Free in England, Scotland and Wales.

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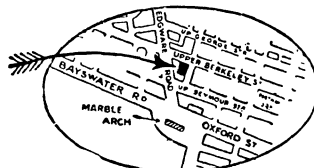
VANTAGE HOUSE,

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'Phone : PADD. 5002.

### The Reward of Effort

A good Clothing Cabinet, like any other work, is the outcome of inspiration, perspiration, and cold commonsense, and it is essentially upon these that Compactom has built and reinforced its reputation.



# HIS TERRIER'S VOICE.

As we crossed the Park we heard in the distance a noise as of half a dozen dog fights conducted simultaneously by a hoarse Underground conductor. Sonny's hand tightened in mine; Tim, Sonny's terrier, pricked up his ears and thought.

"It's only the soldiers drilling in the barrack square," I explained. "Shall we go and watch them?"

Sonny's eyes sparkled, and when we reached



ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

HOUSE AGENT: You've seen the front bedroom; now, this is the linen cupboard, sir.

FLAT-HUNTER: Yes, yes, I've got you—the cupboard is the one with the shelves.

the railings he stood entranced at the spectacle of platoons and companies moving as though by clockwork.

"Woup, woup!" ordered a sergeant-major, and his command was obeyed on the instant.

"Loup, loup!" yelled another, and his men responded like a regiment of Sonny's own leaden warriors.

"How do they know what the sergeants are saying, Daddy?" I was asked at last.

"They are used to the commands," explained. "Each word is an order that the men have obeyed dozens of times before."

"Houp!" A company halted.

"Woup, woup!" They were off again, marching directly towards us.

"The words don't seem a bit plain to me," Sonny insisted. "Do the soldiers never make a mistake?"

"Never," I assured him.

The line was approaching with a steady tramp. It seemed as though they would come up against the iron railings if they did not receive further orders soon. Sonny instinctively backed a pace or two. Tim was standing on the defensive.

Suddenly he decided that things had gone far enough.

"Wowf, wowf!" he barked sharply.

Like one man the line about-turned.

A sergeant-major, purple of face, glared first at the men and then at me. For the moment he was clearly bereft of speech.

Sonny also turned an inquiring face up to mine.

Tim, wondering what was amiss, said, "Wowf, wowf!" again, but more quietly.

I obeyed as smartly as any guardsman.

"We haven't seen the pelicans yet, boy," I said. "Come along, or we shan't have time."

*Humphrey Purcell.*

A BUSINESS man directed one of his clerks to hang out a sign "Boy Wanted." Five minutes later a red-headed little youngster appeared in the office with the sign under his arm.

"Say, mister," he demanded, "did you hang this out?"

"I did," was the stern reply. "Why did you tear it down?"

From among his freckles the boy gazed in wonder at the man's stupidity.

"Why," he replied, "I'm the boy."

THERE are now twelve fewer millionaires in America as compared with last year. It is thought they must have entered some less overcrowded profession.

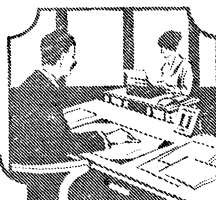


His accountancy work reflects thorough training.

His grasp of intricate details is masterly.



A big correspondence is but a small part of his day.



He has the complete confidence of his staff.

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of success given in this new series of School of Accountancy advertisements are not the most remarkable of the hundreds available. By the most typical. They are the stories of men of ordinary intelligence and education, told with the object of giving example and encouragement to all ambitious men who may read them. Apart from the names, which for obvious reasons are fictitious, every fact is certified true and correct by David Paterson, Chartered Accountant, 135, Wellington St., Glasgow.

## HE IS IN CHARGE of a STAFF THAT AUTHORISES PAYMENT of £15,000 a DAY

**M**AULDON thought his education complete at the age of eighteen. It was the monotony of his salary that disillusioned him.

Mauldon's association with The School of Accountancy occupied nearly a year. His practical benefit was promotion and a large salary increase. But mostly he prized his new, inner consciousness of greater mental strength and self-confidence.

When, later, The School wrote congratulating Mauldon upon securing First place in the Final Examination of the Corporation of Accountants, he concluded a very interesting reply with the news—"I am now in immediate charge of a staff that authorises the payment of about £10,000 to £15,000 a day."

### Not for "any and every" man

You may ask how it is that School of Accountancy Students are so consistently successful. A point which has great bearing on this is that the School accepts no enrolment unless it is convinced of the man's ability to benefit by training. The School realises that the power to rise to a responsible position and command a high salary is not possessed by any and every man. So whenever a man's application leads to the belief that he is unlikely to succeed under the School's system of training, he is frankly told so, and no fee of any description is charged.

### Opportunities within your reach

Every control position in commerce is open to ambitious men by School of Accountancy training. There are Courses for men without the slightest previous experience in business, and Courses for men already holding Managerial and Executive positions.

Besides training men for such positions as Accountants, Secretaries, Cost Accountants, Office Managers, Cashiers, etc., The School extends the qualifications of technical men by teaching them the finance and accountancy of business.

### Train for Professional Status

The following Professional Examinations are open to anyone. Success in many of these Examinations confers upon the Student Professional Status and the right to use after his name letters which are recognised qualifications all over the world. School of Accountancy Students rarely fail to pass at the first attempt.

*The London Association of Accountants (A.L.A.A.).*

*The Chartered Institute of Secretaries (A.C.I.S.).*

*The Secretaries Association (A.I.S.A.).*

*The Institute of Cost and Works Accountants (A.C.W.A.).*

*The Corporation of Accountants (A.C.R.A.).*

Other independent Examinations for which The School Trains men are C.A., S.A.A., I.M.T.A.,

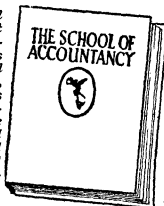
R.S.A., L.C.C., Institute of Bankers, B.Com. Degree, University Matriculation.

### Up to 800% increases in salary

From time to time The School invites its students to state the exact extent to which they have benefited by their training. The result to date is one long series of striking achievements, in which increases in salary range up to 800 per cent. That these achievements are in the majority of cases the outcome of six to twelve months' spare-time study proves that there is no way to business success more swift and sure than that offered you by School of Accountancy Postal Training.

### This Valuable Business Guide—FREE

It contains useful information about careers and business training, gives particulars of all Courses and Terms, and includes facts which will convince you that The School's Postal Training will qualify you to fill a responsible executive position.



Write for a copy to-day to

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2, West Regent Street, GLASGOW.

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AND AT EDINBURGH, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, CARDIFF, AND BRISTOL.

**If you will make an effort to qualify for a responsible position in business THE SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTANCY will stand by you until you succeed.**

PARCELS.

Down the clamorous street, on lingering feet,  
 Comes a concourse that never stops.  
 They cannon and blunder, weighed down by the  
 plunder  
 They've bought at the radiant shops.  
 And there's jostle and jam in tube and tram,  
 Hurry and flurry and racket;  
 Arms may be weary, but spirits are cheery,  
 For everyone carries a packet.

One! Three or four, and frequently more,  
 Till purses are empty of pelf;  
 But at times like the present we pay and look  
 pleasant,  
 For nobody thinks of himself.  
 There's a thrill in the air as onward we fare,  
 Embracing our brown-paper treasures,  
 Sure passports are they for a blithe Christmas Day,  
 For to give is the purest of pleasures.

Jessie Pope.

"Do we all get a bit?" she demanded of her mother in a loud whisper.

Rosemary, looking ravishingly beautiful in her bridal dress, heard the anxious question.

"Peggy, darling," she said, "here's a very special piece, just for you."

"Oooh!" Peggy clasped it with both her small hands.

"Say, 'Thank you, Aunt,' " I prompted.

"Thank you, aunty," echoed Peggy, and gazed rapturously at the white icing.

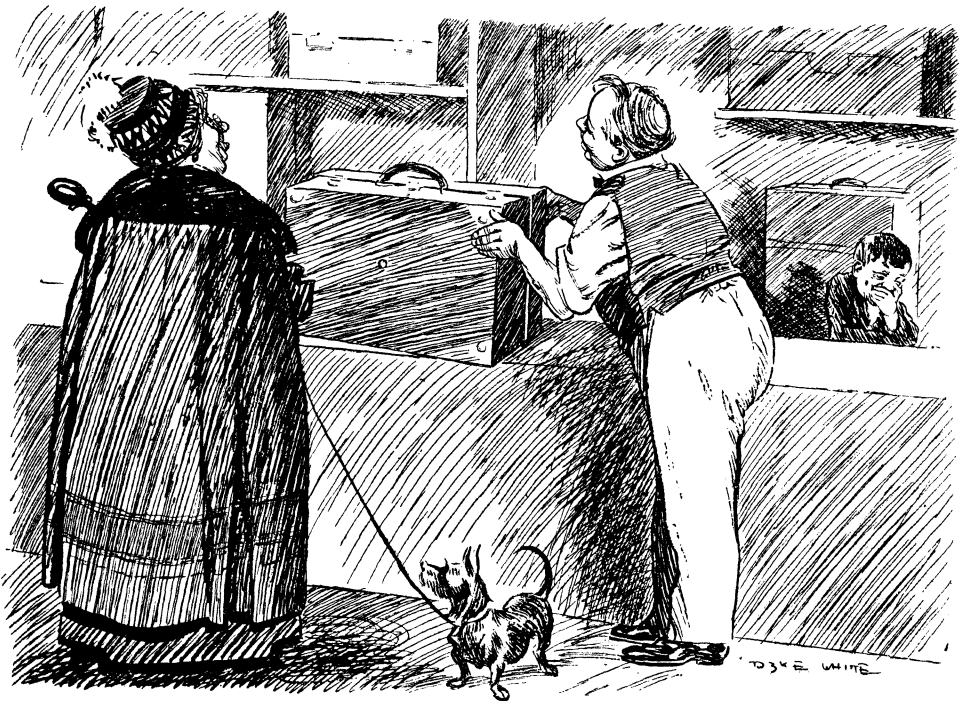
Rosemary bent down and kissed her.

"Keep it carefully till you get home," she said. "Then sleep with it under your pillow, and whatever you wish for, you will get."

"Really and truly?" demanded Peggy.

"Really and truly; you ask Daddy."

I corroborated Rosemary's statement, and Peggy appeared duly impressed.



HARD TO PLEASE.

"THERE, madam, that's just what you want. This portmanteau is solid leather—every inch of it solid leather."

"But, my good man, I want a hollow one, to put things in!"

HAVING YOUR CAKE.

Of course I know that parents always think that their particular children are exceptionally clever—it is, I suppose, only natural—still, there can be no doubt that my little daughter Peggy is possessed of more than the average share of brains.

Last week Rosemary got married. Rosemary is my wife's sister, and Peggy's favourite aunt. The bridegroom was a soldier, and Rosemary cut the extremely fine wedding cake with his sword, an operation which Peggy followed with great interest.

That evening my wife called softly to me from the top of the stairs. I went up quietly and joined her.

"Come and look," she whispered, and motioned me to follow. Together we tip-toed into Peggy's bedroom. My little daughter was lying on her back fast asleep, but the pillow, instead of being under her head, was carefully placed in the middle of the bed on top of the counterpane.

With deft fingers my wife removed it and inserted it under Peggy's curly head; then we crept out again.



# THE "BRITANNIC" EXPANDING Watch Bracelet



## THE QUEEN OF WATCH BRACELETS

The "BRITANNIC" Expanding Bracelet has made an unrivalled world-wide reputation for its durability and the charm of its designs.

These bands are guaranteed for five years, and the springs will be renewed free of charge any time during that period through any jeweller.

The "BRITANNIC" may be seen at all good class jewellers, complete with watches in various styles, from 5 guineas.

Also "BRITANNIC" expanding bands alone, with hooks, to replace straps.

*See the name "BRITANNIC" is engraved inside the band, because very inferior imitations are offered as "BRITANNIC" Bracelets by unscrupulous jewellers.*



## Complexion Soft and Clear as Baby's

EVERY woman has it, you know, UNDERNEATH. But how to remove the soiled, weather-worn outer skin with all its blemishes, is a secret at present little known. In America the women submit themselves to

### THE HEROIC PROCESS OF SKINNING,

*i.e.*, having the outer cuticle removed by a carbolic acid solution. The process is not only extremely painful, but necessitates the patient keeping to the house for several weeks. In this country

### SCIENCE HAS PROGRESSED

so far that any woman, or man, may confidently remove their skin without pain or inconvenience of any kind. All that they need do is to get a little mercolized wax from the Chemist, and smear it over the face and neck.

### IT TAKES ABOUT TEN DAYS

to complete the transformation, and nobody will be any the wiser, except of course for the great improvement in your appearance. Don't simply ask for wax; it must be

### MERCOLIZED

2/- and 3/6. The large size contains nearly three times the quantity of the small.

## A XMAS

### Message from Mills

On these excellent goods you effect a considerable saving. For the "Old Folks" they make most acceptable gifts and to younger folk, thinking of home making, they would be equally welcome.

**15/-** (Saving you 7/6)

#### THE MILLS COMPANION SET.

An ornament of utility and beauty. Strongly and artistically made. Oxydised copper on brass, superior quality. Keeps bright without cleaning. Brush, Pokerette, Shovel, Tongs & Stand. Usual price 22/6 each.

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Polished—Fumed or Jacobean.

10 ins. high. **4/-** each. **7/6** pair.

5 ins. base. Make artistic ornaments and very acceptable Christmas gifts.

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Read in comfort, hands free for knitting, crocheting, nursing, typing, etc.

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Polished Mahogany, each **3/6**

All Goods Post Free. Satisfaction guaranteed or Money Back.

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The next morning at breakfast I asked Peggy for an explanation.

"Peggy, darling, why did you go to sleep without your pillow last night?"

"I put it on top of me," said Peggy.

"Yes, I know, darling, but why?"

"Well," said my young daughter, "Auntie said if I slept wif the cake under my pillow I should get what I wished for, really and truly, only I got so dreffully hungry, so I ate the cake and then went to sleep wif the pillow over my tummy."

As I said before, I think Peggy has more than the average share of brains.

Gilbert Davis.



NO MISTAKE.

DINER: This sauce tastes like furniture polish!

WAITER: Quite right, sir. You ordered Cabinet Pudding.

#### CHRISTMAS RECOLLECTIONS.

'Twas Christmas Eve. He thought again  
Of things that happened long ago;  
Memories, half delight, half pain,  
Thronged round him in the firelight glow.

The shadows grew, 'twas nearly dark,  
The time when day and evening meet,  
Then swift he turned his head, for hark!  
He heard her voice alluring, sweet.

It stirred him, stirred him to the heart,  
Yet though she murmured, "Dear, good-bye,  
Kiss me once more before we part!"  
He did not move, made no reply.

Again she voiced her fervent plea,  
Although he chanced to be alone,  
Her words rang through his ears, for she  
Was singing on a gramophone!

Leslie M. Ogler.



#### RETALIATION.

"I HAVE been reading an awfully good thing in 'The Home-Hinter,' George," said Ann. "How to make tobacco pouches out of old gloves. I think I'll do you one for a Christmas present."

"Thank you very much," exclaimed George hurriedly. "But I already own a jolly good pouch—been in the family for years."

"Oh, but you can always do with an extra one. This is going to be ever so posh—white kid, embroidered with your monogram in colours, and drawn together with a dainty cord."

George was by this time considerably alarmed, but concealed himself behind a newspaper, and wondered what on earth he should do about it.

"Ann, old thing," he remarked a few evenings later, "a fellow I know imparted a ripping scheme to me this morning; he got it out of 'The Handyman.' How to make ladies' leather vanity bags from old boots. Seems rather a bright notion. I'm going to construct one for you for Christmas."

Ann looked startled. "I'm—er—I'm rather well off for vanity bags," she faltered.

"But this will be a special line, fitted with all the latest improvements, a mirror fixed on the sole, a powder-puff concealed in the heel . . ."

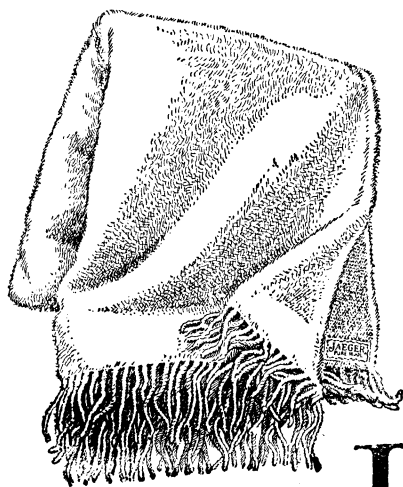
"By the way, George dear," interrupted Ann, "I don't think I'll make that pouch for you, after all; perhaps it wouldn't be quite the thing." R. H. Roberts.



A TELESCOPE which makes things appear two hundred times larger has been installed at a seaside resort. It is said to give great satisfaction to local anglers.



PROFESSOR GREGORY of Yale University predicts the return of the Ice Age. We seem to remember something of that sort occurring last June.



## Christmas Presents for all.

You will find something to please Mother, Father, and Children in the **Jaeger List of Christmas Presents.** Get it at once. It will help you when choosing your gifts. Here are two items.

**Knitted Scarfs** - from **5/11**

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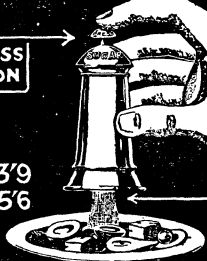
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The curious shape covers more space and gets into more difficult corners than is possible with a cloth or brush. PICKS UP DUST AND DOES NOT SCATTER IT.

Made in two sizes—18 ins. long, 1/5; 23 ins. long, 1/11. Postage 4d. extra; 6d. for two. POLISHES AS IT CLEANS.

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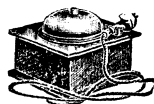
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PORTABLE

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TO AN OLD FLOAT.

So there you are !  
You, with your saucy scarlet tip, to lie  
In this old drawer, with odds and ends of string !  
You who have heard the south wind whispering,  
And hobnobbed gaily with the butterfly  
Who sought our water-lily like a star !

Ah, well-a-day!  
We were such faithful comrades, you and I.  
Bobbing among the weeds, I see you yet,  
Dancing, and then sucked down, and then held  
high!  
Hail to you, float! Right glad I am we met!  
Glad that you chanced my way!

**Out, Income Tax! Thought of terrific rentals, Avaunt! . . . . I'm going now to dig for gentles!**

*Fay Inchfawn.*

*Author of "Through the Windows of a Little House."*



## A BAD SHOT.

**CUSTOMER:** I want a large floating bowl.

**ABSENT-MINDED SHOPWALKER:** Certainly, madam—bathroom department on the left.

"MOTHER," said Bobby, "what does daddy go down town for every day?"

"To work, so that Bobby can have a good dinner every day," mother replied to her youthful son.

A few days later, when Bobby sat down to dinner, he viewed the table with a critical eye. Not seeing his favourite dishes, he disdainfully shrugged his small shoulders and grunted: "H'm! Daddy didn't do much to-day, did he?"



HE: I hear that the people who have bought the manor house are keen collectors of antiquities.

SHE: Yes. I saw them in their car to-day. But did he collect her, or did she add him to her collection?

*Facing Third Cover.]*

## WIFE'S WIRELESS WORRIES.

WIFE (in the pre-wireless era): My dear, it's simply awful! John is hardly ever at home in the evening. What with the club, and committee meetings, and late work at the office, I hardly see anything of him. And if he is not actually out, he is pottering about in the garden.

THE SAME WIFE (a year later): It is really most trying, my dear! John sticks in during the entire evening now. Always listening-in. Whenever I think of something important to tell him, it's "Sh-sh! Wait a minute. News bulletin just coming on." Then when I get a chance to speak, I've forgotten what I wanted to say. He never stays late at the office now; I believe he's neglecting his business, and the garden is going to rack and ruin. Aren't men perverse creatures?

A FRIEND was telling a physician of an acquaintance who undertook to diagnose his own ailments by reading medical books.

"This man's case reminds me of an observation made by a distinguished Continental doctor years ago," said the physician. "He, too, knew of a chap who pored diligently over medical works in order to prescribe for himself. 'Be careful, my friend,' said the doctor, 'or some day you'll die of a misprint.'"



"IKEY," said the Hebrew parent out for a walk with his little boy, "are you wearing dose new boots I bought you?"

"Yes, farder."

"Vell, take longer steps."

JAN 4 1924

THE

ONE-SHILLING-NET

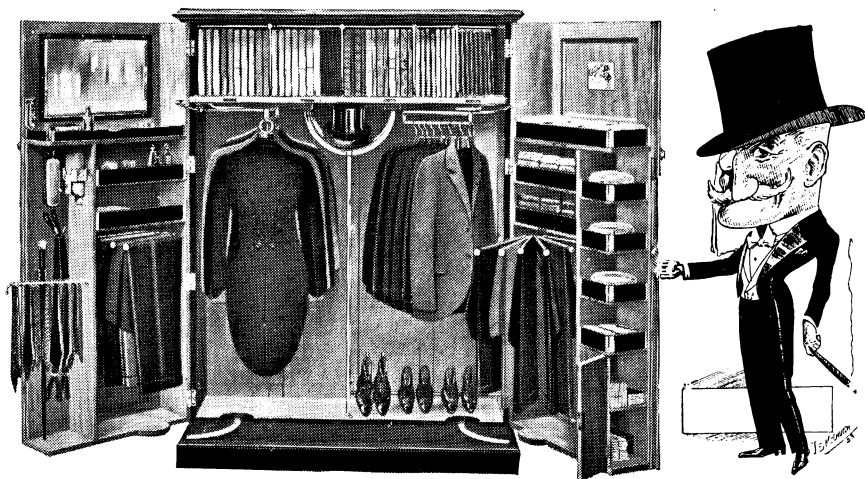
# WINDSOR

JANUARY



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## The Compactom Clothing Cabinet

*We think you will eventually like to see our Catalogue. May we send one now?*

Constructed of selected Mahogany or Oak throughout, the exteriors are finished in standard shades of Mahogany, Walnut or Oak, that will harmonise with any decorative scheme.

Overall dimensions: 4' 3" x 5' 7" x 1' 10".

To ensure perfect delivery, even where entrance space is limited, it is made in five portions.

The separate compartments are adjustable and adaptable to any quantity and kind of clothing.

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### 29½ Guineas.

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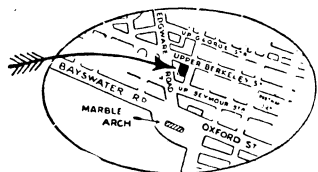
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GETTING READY.

*Photograph by Alfieri. See article on "Ski-ing," page 123.*





"Good-bye, Richard. I'm leaving a bit of me behind—a bit of my heart.—Jo."

# PRIVATE PAPERS

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "*Valerie French*," "*Berry and Co.*," "*Jonah and Co.*," "*Anthony Lyveden*,"  
 "*The Brother of Daphne*," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

I.

JANUARY 7TH, 1920.

I AM writing this down because Jo says I must—dear, beautiful Jo, with the great grey eyes and the maddening mouth. I tell her it is ridiculous—that in a short month the miracle will have sunk to a coincidence, the marvel to a curiosity. But she will have none of it: and, since she is leaning over my shoulder and has set her blessed cheek against mine, for what the business is worth down it shall go.

Last night we dined with the Meurices. Not of choice, but we agreed it was politic. A refusal might have been thought bilious.

It is hard to see how, but it might. After all, I have been perfectly frank about my resignation. Now that I am married, I cannot stay on if I am not to be paid two-thirds of what I can earn elsewhere. And 'The Office' has been equally frank and, while expressing its deepest regret, has said that fifteen hundred for a spy is as much as it may afford. However, the Meurices being, so to speak, brass hats, might have misconstrued our refusal. So we went. We did not enjoy it. I cannot keep pace with these diplomats. No doubt they're good at their job, and all their ice-and-brandy ways are probably part of the game. But I am a regimental officer and I am not at ease

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hobnobbing with the gilded staff. I don't suppose they'd 've been at their ease drinking with the shunters at Carlsruhe. . . . But there you are. *Chacun à son goût.*

Well, after dinner a girl—one Roach—was induced to tell our fortunes by dealing cards from a pack. 'Induced' is misleading. Lady Meurice said "Sarah, you've had a good dinner: now tell us some lies." And Sarah replied "'And me the seaweed, Lulu, and I'll tell you where Arthur wore the dog-bite.'" The next minute she was off.

I've heard some junk in my time. . . .

Presently my turn came, and I took my seat at the table and shuffled the pack. Only pausing to take my cigarette from my mouth, use it to light her own and then replace it between my lips, Miss Roach picked up the cards and began the rites of prophecy.

What first she said I forget, but it was thin enough stuff. As a matter of fact, she seemed puzzled: something—some combination, she said, kept turning up. Finally she dropped the cards and took hold of my hand, holding it flat on the table, palm up, and blinking at it through the smoke of her cigarette.

"You're on the eve of meeting someone," she said: "someone who'll influence your life to an amazing extent. They'll affect your outlook more violently than anything else in your life. They'll alter all your plans. The queer thing is they'll do it indirectly. You'll hardly see them at all."

"Will they do me good or harm?"

"I can't say. But, whichever it is, they'll do it through somebody else. It's a terrific influence."

"In fact, I shall be swept off my feet?"

She frowned.

"Not exactly. Your existence will be changed. What's so remarkable is that you retaliate. You're going to influence their life even more strongly still. Only, your influence will be direct and—and concrete."

"Concrete?" said I.

"Physical. Theirs on you will be mental. They'll get off first. After they've influenced you, you start in on them. I should think——"

Mercifully at that moment Berwick Perowne was announced. As he was straight from Moscow, the conjuring went by the board. I was rather interested to see him—I'd heard so much. He'd certainly do any staff credit—a dazzling A.D.C. The face of a careless angel, a tongue of silver, the impudence of the Fiend. His news left Jo

and me gasping. He gave it as though he were describing a game of Bridge. After a while we made our excuses and left. . . .

All the way home in the taxi Jo chattered about 'the prophecy,' till at last I told her that it meant that a nicer man than I was going to steal her away, and I was going to follow and break his back. . . . She put her arms round my neck.

Bugle was waiting for us when we got in: he's a good little dog: he's never really happy unless we're both of us there.

Sitting by the fire in the study, we discussed my resignation. Now that the War's past, I should have been at home a good deal—actually at home with Jo. But we really cannot throw away twelve hundred and fifty a year. Not that I shall have that yet—I start at fifteen hundred: but in a year or two . . . with luck . . . And it means so much. It means a car, frocks, flowers about the house. . . . Jo's eyes were like stars. I think she is the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

But I digress.

'The Office' rang up in the morning and wanted me down at once. I answered the telephone in my pyjamas. Jo was twittering with excitement. I found her, wrapped in a towel, hanging over the banisters, wild to know if it was 'the prophecy.' I tried to scold her, but she refused to be rebuked—as it happens, with good reason.

*The prophecy, or some of it, has been fulfilled.*

At 'The Office' I was introduced to Sir George —, a nervous little man with a short leg. He used to be in the game, and came back to help at 'The Office' during the War. Shortly, it is his wish to be permitted to supplement my old pay so that it reaches my figure—two thousand seven fifty a year. He considers it would be a pity for 'The Office' to lose my services: he understands my position: and, provided I agree to remain, he will hand the Treasury sufficient War Stock to pay twelve fifty a year, such money to be paid to me quarterly while I do my job and, when I retire, to be added to my pension. . . .

I tried my best to thank him, but I kept seeing the stars in Jo's dear eyes. . . .

There. I have set out the miracle. As Sarah Roach said, so it has fallen out. I have met the person I was on the eve of meeting. By him my life is to be influenced to an amazing extent. My existence is to be changed. Instead of being a partner in a shipping firm, I shall go back to my own

old job. My outlook has been switched from bills of lading to that exhilarating game of blind man's buff. Instead of lunching in the City and arranging about freights, I shall be studying men and the ways of men, peering into their brain-pans, searching their hearts, watching and waiting and coping with sudden issues, stalking the truth under strange heavens, trying to beat Delusion at her own game. . . . More. Sir George is doing it indirectly—through somebody else: and I shall hardly see him at all.

It remains to be seen how I am to influence him . . . even more strongly . . . directly . . . physically.

Sufficient unto the day is the perfection thereof.

And now we are going out to look at a car fit for a queen to drive . . . my queen . . . my darling Jo. . . .

## II.

NOVEMBER 22ND, 1920.

The contrast is so ridiculous that I must set it down.

It is half-past nine, now, of a streaming night.

At this hour a week ago I was in Madrid.

Why I was there does not matter, but I was leaning back in a chair, just as I am leaning now, regarding the ugliest man I have ever seen. And he was regarding me with beady eyes. The room was filthy and bare and frightfully cold. And I was soaked to the skin. One naked electric lamp hung from the ceiling, shedding a harsh light. I was smoking a filthy cigar and from time to time I spat upon the boards. When I spoke, I spoke in vile Spanish, helping myself out with Russian words. I tried to speak the Russian very well. To be frank, I was very uneasy. I was keeping a certain appointment—an appointment with the ugly man. I had arrived early, an hour too soon. The appointment had been arranged for a quarter to ten. My early arrival hadn't mattered at all. In fact, he was quite nice about it—as nice as he was capable of being, this ugly man. And everything had gone very well. I gave him my news, and he gave me his. His, I may say, was the more valuable. I was extremely glad of it. I did not say so, of course. But I was—extremely glad. And now, having stayed with him nearly an hour, I was inclined to be gone. It was really rather important that I should bid him good-bye, because the appointment I had kept had been made for

somebody else. And, as I had kept it without advising them, in the ordinary course of events they would keep it, too. Indeed, unless they were late; they would knock twice on the door at a quarter to ten. Possibly they might be early . . . But one thing was certain. That was that, whenever they did arrive and they and the ugly man found out that a total stranger had been receiving his valuable news, they would both be most annoyed. . . . The trouble was that my host didn't mean me to go. . . .

I owe my life to the fact that my hearing is good—at any rate, better than that of my ugly friend.

I heard the step on the landing before he did.

So I broke the electric lamp, hit the ugly man on the nose with a bottle of wine, sang out in infamous Russian "Come in," adding a vocative which will send any Russian white to the lips, opened the door quietly, and when the other had entered, which he did with the rush of a bull, faded away, as they say, and left them to it.

That was a week ago.

And now once more I am leaning back in a chair, regarding my *vis-à-vis*. I am in London now. The room is warm and pleasant, and its walls are lined with books. Here and there hangs an etching. The windows are heavily curtained, and there is a fire of logs in the grate. The light is soft and grateful and filters through rose-coloured silk. The floor is of parquet, on which are spread Persian rugs. And I am in dress-clothes, dry and smoking a pipe. And my mind is at ease.

And, instead of the ugly man, I am regarding, I think, the loveliest woman I ever saw. She's wearing a flowered silk frock, and her arms lie like marble along the arms of her chair. Her knees are crossed, and the flames are lighting the sheen of a satin slipper and the black silk stocking above. Her sweet chin is down on her chest, and her great grey eyes are looking upon my face. And when I look up a light comes into the eyes and a smile comes to play about the beautiful mouth. . . .

And as I wrote those last words she did a thing the ugly man never did and never will do—to me. She blew me a kiss.

I'm sorry I hit him so hard. He deserved it, I know. He deserved to be sawn in two. Still, he did give me a cigar. And, perhaps, if ever he'd known the love of a lady—if anyone ever had looked and smiled on him as sweetheart Jo is looking and smiling on

me, he wouldn't have been so vile or kept such doubtful company.

### III.

MARCH 3RD, 1922.

I am dazed . . . stunned . . . I keep thinking I am asleep and that any minute I shall wake and find it is a dream. I have picked at and felt the letter a score of times to see if it was real. I repeat, I am stunned. My brain is staggering, making fumbling efforts to grasp the frightful truth, getting hold of it—and then, because the truth sears it as an iron sears the flesh, dropping it and clutching fantasy with a wild, desperate clutch. . . And fantasy grins and shakes it off and thrusts it back upon the scorching truth. . . .

*Oh, Richard, I don't know how to write. You've been so wonderful to me, and now—I'm letting you down. I can't help it, Richard. It's something stronger than me. If only I could have you both. But I can't. I've got to choose. And I must go to Berwick—Berwick Perowne. I've tried not to—indeed, I have. But now I can't fight any more. . . .*

*Try and forget me, dear. I'm not fit to be remembered. Try and forget the waster you treated so well. And don't think I'm ungrateful. Strange as it sounds, I'm not. I'm so ashamed, Richard, so terribly, bitterly ashamed, that I can hardly lift my head. But Berwick. . . . There's something, Richard, you and I never knew. I know it now. I've found it in Berwick Perowne. And I pray the time will come when you'll find it, dear, in someone better than me. And then, I think, you'll understand.*

*Good-bye, Richard. I'm leaving a bit of me behind—a bit of my heart.*

Jo.

*I am so thankful Bugle will never know.*

There. I have copied it out, word for blinding word. Some of the writing is blurred, but it is beautifully plain and easy to read. I remember the first note she wrote me—how pleased I was to see what a good hand she had . . . nothing bizarre, just simple, downright, strong. Nothing is slurred—nothing.

I perceive I am trying to gain time—to put off recording the truth. I never did that before, never shrank. If I had to report a failure, I always began with the worst. 'I regret I have failed to secure. . . .' I don't know why. I think it seemed easier that way. Certainly, putting it off makes it no easier. More difficult, I think.

Jo has left me.

I think I'll give that sentence a line to itself. Incidentally, I can't imagine why I'm writing this down. I don't write things down as a rule—not these sort of things. I suppose I am writing it down because my brain is plunging like a terrified horse and I am hoping to calm it by showing it exactly what it is up against, and so to be able to coax it under this frightful archway and into—into the hell beyond. I suppose, poor brute, it doesn't like the look of the hell, and that's why it shies and jibs as if it had seen a ghost.

My good fool, you have seen no ghost, but a perfectly plain, crisp fact—the fact that Jo has gone. Those are her gloves on the table: they still smell of her perfume. If you look at the finger-tips, you will see the faint outline of her beautiful nails. And that is her photograph, there, in the silver frame. But the original has gone . . . leaving behind this letter and—other things. Me, for instance. . . .

For God's sake let's get down to facts—to see if there isn't some loophole, some flicker of hope.

I had to go to Scotland two days ago. I went by night. I promised Jo I'd be back to-night without fail. We dined without dressing that evening, and Jo seemed rather quiet. I thought it was because I was going away. And—God forgive a fool—I tried to cheer her up. I said that when I was back we'd go down to Bond Street and ask the price of that comb. And Jo put her head in my lap and burst into tears. . . . Of course, I see now. At the time I thought. . . . I kissed her good-bye and went. At twenty to seven to-night I was at King's Cross, and I got the comb with about a minute to spare. That's it—in the box on the mantelpiece. Then I drove home. As I let myself in, Bugle and Mason appeared. As the latter was taking my coat—

"Where's her ladyship?" said I.

"Her ladyship's out, sir," said Mason. "I think she's been called out of Town."

I stared at the fellow blankly.

"'Called out of Town'?" said I.

"I—I believe so, sir. But she left a note on your table, sir. I expect that'll say. . . ."

I hurried into the study, wondering what on earth. . . .

I see by my watch that that was four hours ago—four hours. And I am thirty-six and as hard as iron. In the ordinary course of things I shall live to at least

sixty-five—another twenty-nine years. How many hours is that ?

Well, there are the facts. And here is the letter she left. And here am I. I am the latest instance of that most common unfortunate—a man who has lost his wife.

Will nothing make me realise it ? I write these things down—these ghastly, frightening facts. I say them over aloud—without result. They are ugly strings of words, but that is all. I know that any second I shall hear her key in the lock. And Bugle knows it, too. He is lying couched by the door, with his head between his paws. He has lain like that for three hours . . . waiting . . . waiting. . . . And he is losing his labour : because, though Jo has gone out, she will never come in . . . never. . . .

I think I am beginning to comprehend the truth. The sight of that little white dog lying there by the door seems to have—to have emphasised something . . . rammed home . . . something. I know. I know what it is. I realise his folly in lying there. I see that he is a fool—because he is waiting for something which never will come to pass. I don't lie there and wait, because I know better. And I know better because I can read . . . read Jo's letter . . . which says . . . that—she—is—not—coming—back . . . not—coming—back. . . .

My beautiful, darling wife is not coming back any more.

That light step in the hall, that eager voice, that quick flutter in the doorway—are silent for ever. Bugle and I will never hear them again. For the last time Jo has leaned over my shoulder, sat by my side at meat, put her sweet arms about me and kissed my lips. She had a way, I remember, of holding her little hands—when she was specially interested, sharing some venture of mine. “Yes, Richard ? Yes ?” she'd cry, with her precious lips parted and a light in her blessed grey eyes that made me feel heroic and turned my twopenny tale into an exploit. It was always like that. Always her fresh, panting spirit lifted me up. Whatever the road, her footsteps made it shine. I'm not a dancer, but I could dance with Jo.

And now—finish . . . *finish*.

‘Finish.’ The word stares at me with a queer, crooked look. I never thought of it before, but what a funny-looking word it is. It looks as though it ought to have two n's. ‘Finish.’ Never mind. The point is that several things are over. My dancing days, for instance. And the light in Jo's

grey eyes. And the little way she had of—*My God!* What shall I do ? How shall I live and move ? I'm like a man in the dark in a dangerous place. I don't know which way to turn. I'm left . . . left. Everything I did was with Jo, or for Jo, or because of Jo. I moved round her, as planets move round their sun. And now my sun's gone . . . my sun . . . my glorious sun. . . .

I must pull myself together. I've done it before. I mustn't gibber and crouch. I must stand up and look Fate in the eyes. I've done that before, too. And she shrank back, as she shall shrink back now.

Jo, my wife, has gone to another man. What of it ? I shall be lonely, of course. The little house'll seem strange, I shall go more to the Club, as I used to do—before I was married. I shall have to order the meals and keep the servants more or less up to the mark. And the evenings will seem a bit long. And when I go—to Scotland, there won't be any occasion to hurry back. And that—that's about all.

I think I'll keep her things just as they are. I mustn't get maudlin, but I think that I can do that. Just keep them out and about. It'll seem more natural. And after a while they can gradually be put away . . . after a while. . . .

And now I must go to bed.

I must go to ‘The Office’ to-morrow and, before I go, I must get out a short report. I meant to have done it to-night, but it's too late now.

She was so exquisite, Jo was . . . so beautiful, gay, sweet . . . so proud to all the world, so tender to me . . . I'd 've said I was too old for her, only she lifted me up and made me a child.

Berwick Perowne. I hardly know the man, except by name. I've only met him twice. Once that night at the Meurices' and once again at the Ritz. I wonder where—

I must go to bed. I must let old Bugle out and go to bed. The great thing is not to think. If Jo were here, I should—

I must go to—*God! My God! I can't.* . . .

I think I shall sleep here to-night. There's nothing the matter with the Chesterfield, and I can get some rugs from the hall.

And I don't think I shall go to ‘The Office’ to-morrow. If I do, they're bound to act. Whereas, if I hold my hand for another day, S. will have had his money and cut his own throat. And, instead of a bad ten minutes, he'll be broken on the wheel. After all, why shouldn't he be broken ? Others

## IV.

FEBRUARY 20TH, 1923.

At half-past nine last night I was sitting in the study with Bugle, with only the fire for light, when I heard the front door open and someone

come in. Now that Jo's gone, no one but I has a key, so Bugle and I got up and went to the door.

It was Jo.



"I watched her sway to the sofa as if I was in a dream. . . . Then I closed the door and switched on the lights."

Before I could speak her arms were round my neck.

Her cheek, her lips were red-hot: her breath coming in spurts.

"Sorry I'm late, my darling, but Daphne's going away and she simply made me——"

The sentence lost itself in a savage cough.

I watched her sway to the sofa as if I was in a dream. . . .

Then I closed the door and switched on the lights.

Something was wrong, of course.

Jo was seriously ill: her skin was burning like fire.

Besides, she was talking nonsense. At least . . . . For one thing only, I knew that Daphne Pleydell was in the South of France.

Bugle, poor fellow, was almost out of his mind. He was all over Jo, scrambling and whining and pawing and licking her face. For an instant only Jo held him up in her arms. Her sleeves fell back, and I saw how wasted they were. Then—

"You're getting heavy," she laughed, and the poor thin arms gave way and Bugle was in her lap.

Sitting there, flushed, on the sofa, Jo talked and coughed and talked,



"Bugle, poor fellow, was almost out of his mind."

while Bugle kept whimpering with pleasure and I stood watching and noting and thinking what I must do.

She was wet, very wet, sopping—I could smell the reek of cloth—and very, very shabby. I knew the dress she was wearing—a blue coat and skirt. We chose it together at Fury's . . . ages ago. Her little hat was a ruin, and her toes were thrusting out of the wreck of a shoe. Her gloves were awful. One tress of her lovely hair was half-way down, and her face was pinched and peaked, with two splashes of dusky red about her cheek-bones.

I rang for Mason and told him to send a maid to warm my bed and light a fire in the room: after that, to summon a doctor. Then I picked up Jo, still talking, and carried her up the stairs. . . .

All that I did she suffered, just as one suffers the barber to cut one's hair. She took no notice at all of anything, except that now and again she caught my cheek to hers. But she coughed and chattered—nonsense, without a break.

By the time the doctor was there, I'd got her out of the bath and into bed.

He said that she had pneumonia and sent for nurses and drugs.

By eleven o'clock the women had taken over, and all that treatment can do was being done. . . .

Till a quarter past seven this morning I hardly left her side.

At half-past eleven the medicine took some effect, and from then for nearly an hour she never spoke. Then she started again—not chattering any longer, but speaking sterner stuff. The scene had changed.

She talked in a low voice, off and on, right through the night. The cough interfered and her breathing troubled her sorely, but she would talk.

And this, pieced fairly together, is what she said.

"What will I do? I'll tell you. I'll go back to my husband. Perhaps he'll turn me down; perhaps he won't. But, whichever he does, he'll be kind to me, Berwick Perowne. He'd never kick a woman when she was down. I imagine I was bewitched when I turned to you. . . . You 'willed' me, you say? Well, I don't quite know what that means, but I don't see why you should laugh. It's not very generous, considering that you won—while I lost all I had. It broke my heart to leave Richard. You know it did. The first thing

I said, when I saw you that awful evening, was that I couldn't go. And you—you begged and argued until you'd made me late—too late to get back and get my letter before he came. . . . Yes, I know. Oh, you acted well. I never dreamed you were doing it on purpose. I never would have, if you hadn't told me so. . . . Why do you laugh so, Berwick? It's so—so unkind. . . . 'Can't go back'? 'Can't'? What do you mean? It shows you don't know Richard. I tell you. . . . What? Well, what if I did? I shouldn't have told you, of course. It was a secret thing. Richard told me, because I was his wife. I don't know what he'd say if he knew that I'd told you, but—why do you laugh like that? I haven't said anything funny. It's very serious. I don't think you realise how serious it is. If you repeated that secret—if you were to tell anyone that Richard had left for Scotland *and never gone there*, that he'd been at Chatham nearly the whole of the time, that he'd only left for Scotland because he knew he was watched and he wanted to make certain people believe he was out of the way—if you were to mention *that*, why, don't you see you'd be doing a frightful thing? You'd be betraying Richard and 'The Office,' too: while, as for me, you'd be stamping me as a traitress in Richard's eyes. He thinks ill of me, of course. I've done him an awful wrong. But, short of absolute proof, he'd *know* that I never was that . . . not treacherous. . . . I've got so little left. I've chucked so much away. But what I've still got I treasure—oh, more than life, far more . . . a little shred of honour, very shabby and worn, but clean. . . . And you see, if you talked, you'd be tearing that shred away. It'd come to Richard's ears in twenty-four hours. He knows everything. He's got to. And, as I was the only soul in all the world he told, he'd know it was me. So you see how terribly important it is that you shouldn't breathe a— Why do you smile like that? What have I said? Can't you see how. . . . You can? Then why do you laugh? . . . 'Because I've put it so well'? What do you mean? Put what so well? . . . 'Your case'? It isn't your case. It's mine. I don't understand. I said I'd go back to Richard, and so I will. For all the wrong I've done him, he'll still be kind. He'd never jeer at a woman because she cried. And he never struck a woman in all his life. . . . 'Can't go back'? Why? What do you mean? . . . 'I've told you

myself—just now'? 'Told you'? I don't understand. How have I told you I can't go back to Richard? . . . *My God!* You wouldn't! You couldn't do such a thing. Only a fiend. . . . You know I shouldn't have told you: but you—you pressed me so hard. And that was between you and me. You can't use an indiscretion to force my hand. You can say you'll tell people this or tell people that, but you can't give away a secret that wasn't mine to tell. . . . 'Can'? Well, 'won't,' then. You won't do a thing like that! Think what it means to Richard and means to me. Think. . . . You *will* . . . if—I—go—back? You—*will*? Give Richard away . . . and 'The Office' . . . tear up my shred of honour . . . blacken me in Richard's eyes. . . .? *Oh—my—God* . . . All right. . . . Yes, I'm beaten. . . . I—I give you best. . . . You've won. You've won again. . . . I see, I understand. I see that I—I can't go back. . . . Yes, I see why you laughed. . . . Yes, I suppose it was. . . . I do indeed, Berwick. I do, I do. . . . It was peculiarly humorous—my failure to perceive that I was stating your case. . . . No, don't make me say that. . . . I'd—I'd rather not. It sounds so hideous, so— Oh, don't, Berwick! You're hurting! *A-ah!* All right. Let me go. I'll say it. 'Damning my chance of withdrawal out of my own pretty mouth.' . . . Yes, I do see. I've said so. I see that I—can't—go—back. . . ."

One more extract I'll give.

"I'm very sorry, Berwick. I think it's a little cold. . . . No, I promise I won't. You shan't know there's anything wrong. I think if I wear my fur. . . . All right. I won't wear it. I don't mind a bit—really. . . . You know I won't let you down. I shall be all right to-mor—to-night. I'm very strong. . . . Oh, I just felt shivery. . . . No, I promise I won't. . . . I know you hate anything sick. I know you do. I didn't think when I shivered. I won't again. . . . I know, but I won't to-night. I didn't know you heard me. . . . 'Why'? Oh, I don't know. I didn't sleep very well, and I suppose I felt like crying. Women do—sometimes. But I won't cry to-night. . . . I'm very sorry, Berwick. I promise I won't to-night. . . ."

And again one more.

"Only two hundred and fifty! Couldn't you give me more? It's a very good fur—worth two or three thousand francs. I don't expect that, of course, but—two hundred and fifty's not enough. I mean, I need four

or five. . . . I'm afraid I've nothing else. I'd let you have this umbrella, only it's raining so. Yes, it's a tortoise-shell top. . . . Couldn't you make it four hundred, or even five? You see, my ticket's expensive and. . . . Five hundred with the umbrella? All right. I must let it go. . . . Five hundred. Thanks very much. . . ."

It was almost six o'clock when the change took place.

Jo stopped talking and began to fight. Of course, she hadn't a chance: but she fought for an hour, like the Great Heart she always was. Again and again she rallied: time after time she tore Death's grip away. And I knelt by her side, while the nurses moved to and fro, ministering, whispering words of encouragement, like seconds plying their principal between the rounds.

As it was striking seven, Jo opened her great grey eyes.

For a moment they wandered over and round the room. Then they fell upon my face.

"I got here, then," she said gently. "I am so awfully glad. I wanted to tell you I loved you and—and other things. . . . Our dream was broken, I know. I broke it, of course. I never knew why. I think that man had some power—I don't know what. Never mind. I broke our dream. But I'd like you to know, my darling, it's the only dream I've had. . . . And I've kept the broken pieces as one keeps a sacred thing. I've worshipped—reverenced them. They've been my only star. There isn't a flinder missing: they're just as they were that day—sparkling and gay and perfect. . . . Only, they're pieces, Richard—broken bits and pieces of what was once our dream. . . . Such as they are, I give them back to you. You gave me the dream, and I broke it. But I've kept the pieces clean, and—here they are."

"I see no pieces, my sweet. You've given me back my dream."

"In pieces, Richard. I broke it."

"And now you've mended it, darling. You've given me back . . . our dream."

The old wonderful light flung into those peerless eyes. The old exquisite smile came playing into her face.

"Oh, Richard," she whispered, as though I had made her a present she never had dared expect.

Then she closed her eyes, but the smile never left her face. And presently, with my cheek against hers, she fell asleep.



And that is all, except that I am going to kill Berwick Perowne.

# V.

MARCH 11TH, 1923.

'The Office' gave me two months' leave — for the purpose of attending to private affairs.' That was on February 25th. Upon the following day I disappeared: and forty-eight hours later I was in touch with Perowne. He had no idea, of course. But I was in touch . . . waiting. . . .

I found him at Barcelona, engaged on some Government job. What the job was I don't know, but it left him plenty of time — to take two people about in his great big car. They were French, these two, and pretty rich. The girl was young and handsome, with a dangerously short upper lip and masses of fine red hair. When Perowne took them out, she sat in front with him, her husband and the chauffeur sitting behind . . . The husband stuck it until five days ago. Then they left for Valencia, they said, he and his wife . . . going by road.

That night I took the lady's name in vain.

I wired from Pampeluna—I had a big car, too—suggesting Perowne should come. He came. I fancy his vanity was tickled. I may be wrong. But I think he liked the idea of the husband chuckling to think that he'd thrown him off the track, while the wife was giving him the tip that they'd taken another road.

A maid at Pampeluna did the rest. At least, she gave him a message, when all the rest of the staff denied the very existence of the lady with the short upper lip and the masses of fine red hair.

The message bade Perowne take the north-east road. This leads into the mountains and is but little travelled till April is old. He took the road the next day, and he took it alone. His chauffeur had supped with me the night before—holding a very short spoon. . . .

I saw him coming, when he was miles away, driving like fury along the elegant road that swept and curled and thrust like some stately serpent up and up into bleak places, where, even beneath the sunshine, spring seemed very distant and the monstrous silence of the depths on either hand turned the trickle of running water into the rush of a sluice.

When he was two miles off, I knocked out my pipe. Then I adjusted my goggles and entered my car.

I drove slowly to meet him on one of the

bends. The corner was blind, but he cut it—I knew he would. He found me full in his path on my proper side. He tried to get through, but I squeezed him and crammed him into the ditch. . . .

I let him talk for a minute, while I moved on and turned my wheels into a bank. Then I locked the switch and got out of the car.

As I came up he let out at me in French. "How long have you been driving?"

I answered in English.

"Ten or twelve years," I said.

"Had many accidents?"

"None. And you?"

He stared.

"Let me give you a tip," he said. "When you're driving a car, don't stick too close to your rights. It's not much good to be able to shout 'You're wrong' when they're pickin' what's left of the wind-screen out of your brain."

"That's a true enough saying," said I, "and here's another. If you shout for trouble, don't squeal when your prayer is heard," and, with that, I took out tobacco and started to fill a pipe.

For a moment he looked like thunder. Then he flung out a laugh.

"I see you're one of the Die-Hards. I confess I never drive with a Bible under my arm. But there you are." He rose and peered at the ditch. "Another two inches of your precious slice of the way, and I should have been all right."

"Four," said I, and pointed to a scar in the road. "That was your safety crease. With a wheel on that, I knew you were bound to go."

Perowne stared at the scar. It might have been cut with a punch. As a matter of fact, it had. Presently he looked at me. I pressed my tobacco home and stared at the sky.

Perowne got out of his car and looked at her tracks. Then he picked up a stick and did some measuring. . . .

"You're right," said he. "Right to an eighth of an inch."

"I know," said I. "I measured your car last night."

For a moment he never moved. Then he took out cigarettes, lighted one carefully, and leaned against the door with a foot on the step.

"So I was wrong," he said softly. "You do know how to drive."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Maybe," said I, watching his right arm

move. "I took your pistol, too," I added carelessly.

For a moment or two he almost lost control. Then he took a deep breath.

"Well," he sighed, "you're thorough. I'll give you that. And my chauffeur? I suppose I owe his failure to the same virtue."

"You do," said I. "And the message."

"Dear, dear," said he. "Not the telegram, too?"

"The telegram, too," said I.

"There now," said he, crossing his legs. "You do work hard, don't you?" With half-closed eyes, he let the smoke make its own way out of his mouth. "Glorious view from here. . . . That why you brought me?"

"In a way," said I. "It's quite a good place to—see the sun go down."

Perowne shot me a glance.

"No doubt," he said shortly. "But—I'm afraid I can't wait so long. And now tell me your game, and I'll see if I care to play. Which is it—blackmail or murder?"

"It's not blackmail," said I, and took off my goggles.

"Hullo," said Perowne. "If it isn't old What's-his-name!"

The thrust was shrewd. Almost I lost my temper. To pretend that she'd meant so little that her name was out of his mind. . . .

Instead—

"Some names sting the tongue," I said quietly.

He lifted his head and looked at the cold blue sky.

"True," he said. "And the brush of some lips, the mouth."

"I'll take your word for it," said I.

"Tell me," he said, frowning. "Did she go back to you?"

"She did," said I: "to die."

"I thought she would," said Perowne.

"Forgive me," said I. "You thought she wouldn't dare." He started. "You used her love for me to bind her feet. That's how you held her, you rotten loose-lipped thief. . . . trading on her devotion to another man. . . . And then at the last, poor lady, she called her bully's bluff, stared Blackmail out of countenance, and came back."

The fellow's face was livid: his eyes, like swords. For a moment he stood trembling, with fists clenched. Then he seemed to think better of his valour and, clapping his hands behind him, threw himself back with a jerk against the spare wheel.

"And now you're out for blood?" he burst out presently.

I knocked out my pipe.

"Some years ago," I said, "I was in Macedonia. Up in the mountains, I remember, there was an old churchyard, quite full of graves." I looked about me. "The place was not unlike this. . . . And every grave had been opened—to release the spirits of the dead. It was a local superstition. Now, what do you think lived and grew fat . . . in that churchyard?"

There was a long silence.

At length I leaned forward.

"Snakes, Perowne, snakes. Snakes that traded on devotion . . . turned piteous piety to their own ends . . . used women's love for their husbands to fill their bellies . . . battered upon the dead . . . And you ask if I'm out for blood. What do you think?"

"Think?" said he. "Why, I think you're very confident."

"I confess it," said I. "I'm a poacher to-day. But you should watch your preserves."

He stared at the edge of the road and into the depths beyond. Then he tilted his chin and scanned the grandeur of Navarre—all mountains and sudden valleys and again mountains like footstools to mountains greater than they, so that the world seemed nothing but a black sea of breakers, foam-crested, petrified.

"You're sore, of course," he mused. "It's a way relics have. . . . But why have you left it so long?"

"I thought she was happy," I said. "It never occurred to me that the man was born who could treat such a lady ill. But it seems you struck her, Perowne."

He cried out at that, but the blood was in my head and I shouted him down.

"More," I raved, "more. You jeered at her grief . . . mocked at her misery . . . twisted those delicate arms . . . cursed her for weeping because it spoiled your sleep . . . bullied my dying girl . . . My God! My God!" I bowed my head and covered my eyes with my hands. "Don't think she told me," I muttered. "She never gave you away. But—"

As I lifted my head, the spare wheel caught me full in the face.

I went down like a log, with the wheel on the top of me. I never remember feeling so shaken up. I wasn't exactly unconscious, but things were distorted—unreal.

I saw Perowne seize a kit-bag and drop it into the ditch. I saw him slip into the

car and I heard her start. I saw her begin to move . . . lurch . . . pitch to and fro. I saw the pitches grow longer—more pronounced. I began to get quite interested, wondering at every failure whether he'd get her out at the next attempt. All the time his engine kept storming like an angry fiend. . . .

Suddenly my brain cleared, and I realised that he was like to be gone and leave me sitting in the road with a wheel in my lap.

I heaved the wheel off my legs and leapt for the luggage-grid, as the car shot back. Its off hind wheel went over the spare with a couple of jerks that nearly threw me off. Then he clapped her into first, bumped over the spare wheel again and flung up the pass, all out. . . .

Perhaps for the very first time in all his life Perowne had lost his nerve. I thought he had, and the moment I saw him I knew. And the knowledge did me more good than the wind in my face. The man was not sitting: he was crouched—with his shoulders up to his ears. His one idea was to get away from that spot. The silence, perhaps. . . .

He never saw me climb up over the hood or settle myself on the seat behind his back. But I did. As a matter of fact, I sat there a minute or two—to get my breath and recover—before I put him wise.

Strangely enough, my touch seemed to bring his confidence back.

He gave one whoop. . . . Then he threw back his head and laughed up into my eyes.

"You do work hard," he said. "I thought you were done."

The road was falling now for a long half-mile.

I stretched out a hand and switched his engine off.

He cursed me for that. Then he stamped on the clutch.

"I'll take you to find her in hell," he cried, and headed straight for the brink.

I clapped my hands on his and wrenched the wheel about.

For a second I thought we were over. . . . Then the car swung back to the crown of the road.

Again he swerved to the off, and I wrenched her back.

All the time the car was gathering speed.

I had the strength, but he had the position. We swayed and swung and swerved all over the road, fighting and raving like madmen to get the upper hand. Twice I went for the brake, but each time, before I could reach it, I had to catch at the wheel. I

crushed his fingers, and he screamed and spat in my face.

We were doing fifty now, and a curve was coming. The man wasn't born that could take it without his brakes. Perowne saw it, too, and laughed.

"Behold our spring-board," he said.

I seized his neck and jammed his face between the spokes of the wheel.

"Now turn it," said I.

Then I applied the brake. . . .

When the car came to rest, I let him lift his head.

Then I put my hands under his chin and looked into his eyes.

"You'll never see her," I said. "She's up in heaven."

He smiled. . . .

I began to bend him back.

"Where there aren't any bullies," I said. "She had her hell upon earth."

"I devilish nearly won," said he.

"You did," said I. "But you made one bad mistake."

"Why, what was that?" said he.

"You lost your nerve."

He struggled at that, and I bent him back again.

"This won't help her," he blurted, panting.

"The more's the pity," said I. "But it'll help me and it'll make the world cleaner."

Again I bent him back, till his eyes were starting and his back curved like a bow.

"For God's sake, end it," he whimpered.

"Ask in her name," said I.

"For . . . her . . . sake."

I broke his back.

Then I turned the wheels to the edge and started the engine up. . . .

The car came to rest finally about six hundred feet below the road—a battered, blazing wreck.

For a moment I watched her burn, and, being human and very much in love with my dead wife, felt better than I had felt for many a month.

That was three days ago.

To-morrow morning I shall report for duty.

## VI.

SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1923.

I came up from Bristol to-day.

Just as the train was starting, the door of my carriage was opened, and a woman was hoisted in.

She stuck a glass in her eye and waved to her breathless squire.

"So long, Nosey," she said. "'Fraid

I'm out of bananas, but here's an onion's heart."

She blew him a kiss and flung herself back in her seat.

I knew her at once: and I began to wonder if she'd remember me. She did. And after a little reflection she opened her mouth.

"Didn't I meet you," she said, "at the Meurices'?"

"That's right," said I. "You told my fortune from my hand."

She looked at me sharply.

"I remember," she said. "Did—did it ever come true?"

"Half of it did. You said I should meet a man who'd have a terrific influence on my life—indirectly, through somebody else. Well, you were perfectly right."

"That all?" she said, looking at me very hard.

"Yes," I said. "That's all that's been fulfilled. So far as I know, I've had no influence on him. And I assume I should know. Mine was to be direct, if you remember."

"And physical," said Sarah Roach.

"And physical," said I, "whatever that may mean. If it's coming off, it'll have to come off quick. He's over seventy-four, and the papers say he's ill."

Miss Roach stared at me as if I was drunk.

"Seventy-four?" she snapped. "Who—what's his name?"

"That I can't tell you," said I. "But he's in Debrett. Why shouldn't he be seventy-four?"

"Oh, I don't know."

She picked up her papers then, and we said no more.

As the train was running into Paddington—

"I don't talk," she said, "but I study women and men and put two and two together rather as you do yourself. And when I've done my addition I like turning up the answer to see if I'm right."

"Well," said I, wondering what was afoot.

"Well, I've done a sum," she said, "and you've got the answer. If I tell you my result, will you tell me whether it's right?"

"It depends on the sum," said I. "I don't talk either, you know."

"It's nothing to do with your job. It's a purely personal matter."

"In that case I'll say 'Yes' or 'No.'"

"Right," said Sarah Roach, "and remember—I don't talk. Did you kill Berwick Perowne?"

"I had that pleasure," said I. "But how did you know?"

She laughed.

"Simple addition," she said. "Besides, I'm half a prophet."

Which is all she'll ever be, so far as I'm concerned. For I see from this morning's paper that Sir George —— is dead.

*Another complete story by Dornford Yates will appear in the next number.*

## ANY MODERN KNIGHT.

**H**ERE I turn aside a space,  
Keeping vigil, craving grace  
That I meet in knightly wise  
Hazard of the commonplace.

Though the quest assigned me lead  
Not to pride nor splendid deed,  
Cleanse my eyes to see the Grail  
Glorifying common need!

Strengthen me to hold in thrall  
Petty thought and action small;  
Grant me down unglamoured ways  
Courage for the trivial!

ANNE PAGE.

# SKI-ING

## ITS EARLY HISTORY AND PRESENT-DAY POPULARITY

By KENNETH R. SWAN

*Ex-President of the Ski Club of Great Britain and Hon. Secretary of the Federal Council  
of British Ski Clubs*

THE comparatively recent cult of ski-ing as a winter pastime and the immense and world-wide popularity which it has attained within the last thirty

people: "Riding on curved boards or slippery planks in pursuit of wild beasts, they glide, twisting and circling, among the bases of the rocks, thus making the route



*Photo by]*

*[Sport & General.*

TRAINING RECRUITS FOR THE NORWEGIAN ARMY ON THE HILLS NEAR CHRISTIANIA: THE NORWEGIAN METHOD OF DOING "ABOUT TURN" ON SKIS.

years are all the more remarkable when one considers that ski-ing is an art of considerable antiquity. For centuries the Finns and Laplanders have been accustomed to use ski as a practical means of traversing snow-bound country. Procopius (*circa* A.D. 530) and several other early historians of the North refer to a race of "Skridfinnar," which, being interpreted, means "gliding Finns." The Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, writing in the thirteenth century, gives the first clear description of these

very circuitous by dint of continually swerving aside."

One of the earliest descriptions of the use of ski by the Laplanders we find in Monsieur Regnard's account of his journey through Lapland in 1681. There he relates how they run upon two wooden planks of fir with such remarkable swiftness that no animal, even the fleetest, can escape them when the snow is hard enough to support them.

"These planks," he adds, "are extremely

thick, two ells in length and half a foot broad; they are made pointed at the forward end, and are pierced through at the thickest part for the purpose of passing a leather strap which keeps the foot firm and immovable. The Laplander, who stands erect upon these planks, holds a stick in his hands, to one end of which a round piece of wood is attached to prevent it entering into the snow, and the other end is pointed with a piece of iron. This stick is employed to give him the first motion, and to keep him up while running and to stop him when he chooses; with it he also pierces

One of the earliest pictures of a ski occurs in Baldwin's Latin treatise "*De Calceo*," published at Leyden in 1711. In this encyclopædic treatise upon "*Shoes*" the writer makes the following allusion to ski:—

"To make our account of shoes complete, we include an illustration of the wooden shoes which the Scricfinni and neighbouring tribes use for the purpose of traversing ice and the highest snowfields. Gragninus calls them '*nartæ*'; and if they at all resemble the so-called '*nartæ*' exhibited in the Anatomical Museum at



Photo by)

[Sport & General.

A "CHRISTIANIA" SWING.

the beast he is in pursuit of when he approaches near enough for that purpose. It is difficult to conceive the fleetness of the hunters, who can, by the aid of this instrument, outrun the swiftest animals; but it is impossible to have an adequate idea of their method of descending the steepest precipices, and how they can scale the most craggy mountains. All this, however, they perform with an address which surpasses imagination, and which is so natural to the people of this country that the women are no less adroit in the use of these planks than the men."

Leyden, they are merely longish thin strips of wood curved up in front, with a strip of leather in the middle into which the foot is inserted, the heel being secured by withy bound round it behind. The pair of shoes I saw at Leyden are very simple things about seven feet long and about four inches broad or a trifle more, and are smeared on their upper sides with resin or pitch."

Knud Leems, writing of the Laplander of Finmark in 1767, says: "By a certain machine of an oblong figure fastened to their feet, commonly called wooden sandals,

the Lapps are carried with such rapidity over the highest mountains, through the steepest hills, making no use of the staff, which, in the midst of their course, they hang carelessly and negligently from their shoulders, that the winds whizz about their ears and their hair stands on end."

The free style of running indicated in the above quotation, marks, as will be seen later on, a distinct advance in the art and

however, the use of ski remained, until quite recent times, unknown in Europe, notwithstanding the fact that there are many other European countries where snow conditions are well adapted to make them serviceable during winter months.

Snow-shoes of various kinds, such, for instance, as the Canadian or American Indian racquet-shoes, have, of course, been widely used in snow-bound countries from earliest days. But the ski is a very different thing from the snow-shoe, the latter being serviceable merely for supporting the wearer upon the surface of the snow, and being quite useless for the purpose of gliding over level surfaces or sliding down the mountain slopes.



Photo by]

RUNNING HAND IN HAND.

[Alfieri.

technique of ski-ing, as compared with that described by M. Regnard.

The use of ski by the Norwegians and Swedes is also a matter of considerable antiquity. It was the mark of a proper man in the Sagas to be a good ski-runner; for example, Earl Rogvald of Orkney (died 1159), recounting in verse his nine accomplishments, ranks ski-running amongst them.

With the exceptions above-mentioned,

In Switzerland, which has become the winter playground of so many British ski-runners, the use of ski was entirely unknown to the natives, either for sport or as a practical means of locomotion, until about 1895. Claims to priority are always open to challenge, but so far as the writer's information goes, the first ski used in Switzerland were a pair brought over from Norway to Davos in 1888 by an Englishman, whose Norwegian servant gave miraculous displays of his agility upon these strange-looking implements. The first ski introduced into the Bernese Oberland were taken there by an Englishman in January, 1891, and the inhabitants of Grindelwald came out in large numbers to view what they regarded as an entertaining, though somewhat perilous,

acrobatic performance. These early exhibitions of the new art gained at the time many amused spectators, but no converts, and consequently when, in 1894, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made his famous expedition from Davos over the Furka Pass to Arosa, he could still fairly claim to be a pioneer in the sport of ski-ing in Switzerland.

For some years after this event, ski-ing still remained for the most part the exclusive hobby of a comparatively small number of



Photo by]

[Topical.

SCHMID SEPP JUMPING AT THE INTERNATIONAL SKI-JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIP AT GRINDELWALD ON THE NEW MATTENBERG SKI JUMP.



Photo by]

[Topical.

SKI-JUMPING IN MONTREAL.



Englishmen in various Swiss winter resorts. By degrees, however, the native Swiss peasant perceived the advantages of skiing, both as a means of recreation and as an assistance in carrying on his daily work, and now there are few of the younger generation of Swiss, living in the higher Alps, who are not thoroughly at home upon their ski, and many of them no less skilful than the experts of Norway and Sweden.

The formation of the Ski Club of Great Britain in 1903 marks the first organised attempt to popularise the sport of ski-ing

are in the Grampians, particularly the Cairn Gorm group, and the mountainous country round Braemar, Dalwhinnie, and Kingussie.

Most of the ski-ing done by British runners, however, has been done abroad, and amongst those who are able to go abroad for a few weeks, during the winter months, either to Switzerland or to some of the other accessible winter resorts, ski-ing has made astonishing progress, and its devotees in Great Britain are now to be numbered by thousands.



*Photo by]*

THE TELEMARK TURN, RIGHT TO LEFT.

*[Sport & General.*

in this country. Owing, however, to the extremely limited facilities for ski-ing in the British Isles, it could scarcely be expected that ski-ing would become the democratic pastime it has so rapidly become in other countries where more stable and favourable snow conditions are to be found. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of ski-ing has been done in the hilly districts of England, such as the Peak in Derbyshire, the hills of the Lake District, and on the Cheviots. In Scotland, where in an average season the opportunities for ski-ing are by no means to be despised, the best districts

In various parts of the Overseas Dominions, where the natural conditions are favourable, the sport has been keenly taken up. In Canada, where conditions are pre-eminently suitable for it, ski-ing has been practised for the last thirty years, and forms an important feature in the Canadian winter sports. Australia does not, at first sight, seem naturally adapted for ski-ing, yet on the slopes of Mount Kosciuszko and at Kiandra, in New South Wales, enthusiastic parties of ski-runners have for many years past gathered for their winter sports. The sport has even found its way

into New Zealand, where in the South Island, especially in the district lying between Fairlie and the New Zealand Alps, ski-ing has developed into a regular winter recreation during the months of July and August.

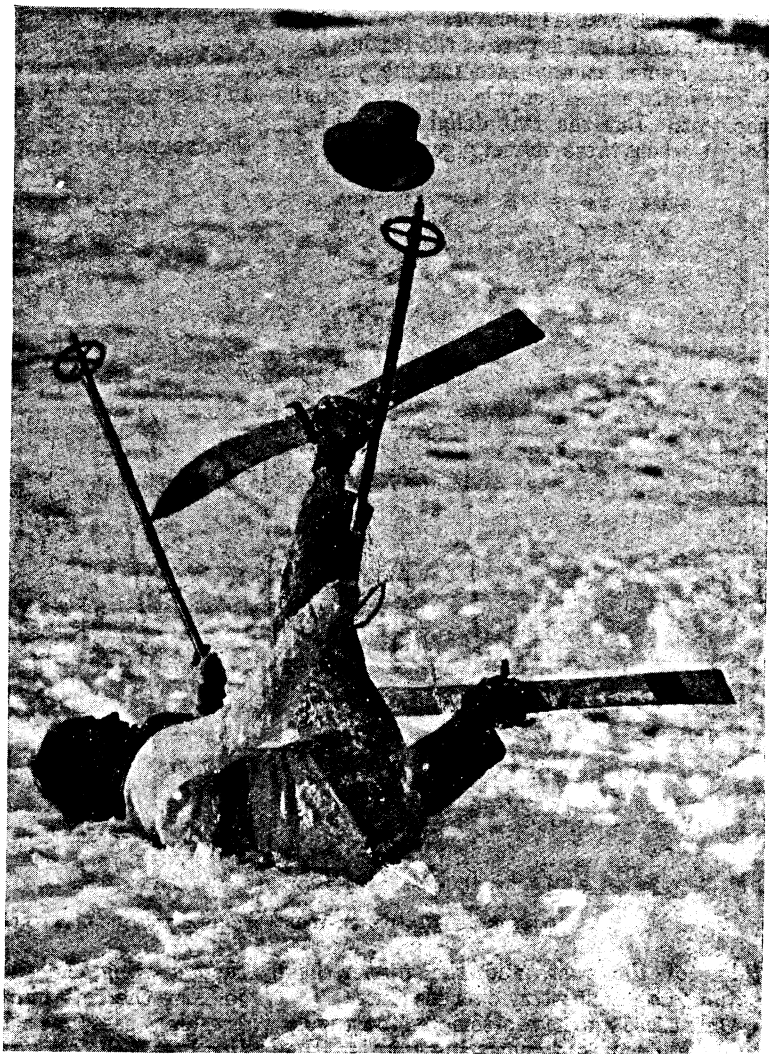
In the United States of America the adoption of ski-ing as one of the popular

winter sports followed shortly upon its introduction into Canada. In the States of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan numerous ski-ing centres have been established, and some of the finest jumps yet recorded have been achieved at championship meetings held at these centres.

The enthusiasm for ski-ing, which developed from 1895 onwards so amazingly amongst English visitors to Switzerland, spread rapidly to other European countries wherever snow and topographical conditions afforded scope for this form of recreation. France, Italy, Germany and Austria possess immense tracts of excellent ski-ing country, and in the last twenty years numerous ski-ing clubs have been formed in these countries, and increasingly large numbers of ski-runners congregate each year at various winter sport centres for national and international championship meetings. Even Spain has caught the fever, and the Guadarama Mountains, whose snow-capped peaks are a familiar feature in many of Velasquez's paintings, are now from February to April the resort of crowds of enthusiastic ski-runners.

It is not easy to analyse the cause of the immense and still growing popularity of ski-ing. Its fascination is compounded of many ingredients, some fairly obvious, others more subtle.

Charles Lamb's characteristic reply to the friend who pressed him to come skating—



*Photo by]*

HOW NOT TO DO IT: ONE OF THE TRIALS OF A NOVICE.

*[Alfieri.]*

that it was a "too sedentary occupation for a man of active habits like himself"—might have been made with equal point, had the invitation been to go ski-ing; for the problem of achieving and maintaining an erect position over one's skis is for a beginner no less perplexing than that which confronts the novice on skates. And

though it may be softer to fall upon the snow than upon the ice, the penalty of falling on ski is, apart from the consideration of mere bruises, far more punishing. No one who has not tried can even remotely imagine the complex postures, the baffling contortions, the apparently inextricable tangles into which the novice on ski can twist and tie himself.

That, doubtless, is part of the fascination of the game, at any rate for the young, whose limbs are still supple enough to stand the test. But the real delight of ski-ing comes when these nursery gambols are a

has suddenly become a splendid highway, smooth and glittering, beneath the all-conquering ski. Mere motion upon its level surface is a joy, and to gather speed upon its downward slopes is sheer ecstasy. To travel swiftly, silently, erect, without effort, now gliding down the straight slopes, now rollicking over gentle undulations where lie deeply buried boulder and bush, smoothly, without jar or jolt, at a speed which makes the wind whistle in one's ears and the water brim in one's eyes; to shape one's course at will this way or that down the mountain-side, with here a curve and



*Photo by*

A LESSON IN THE "KICK-TURN" FROM A YOUTHFUL INSTRUCTOR.

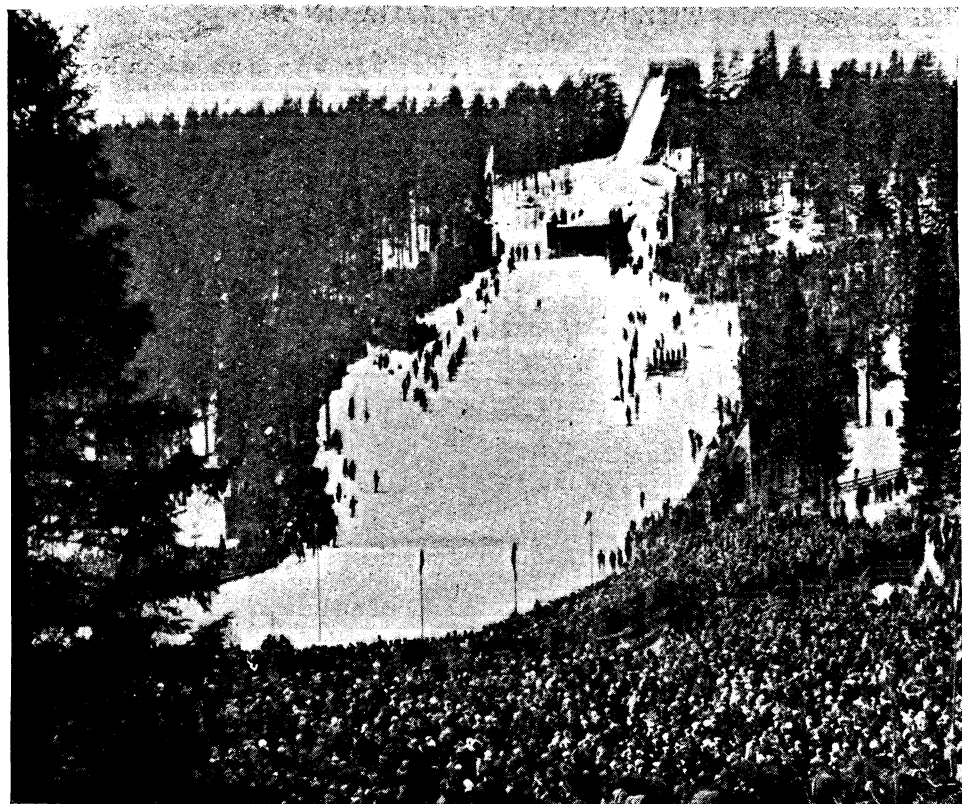
*[Ayeri.]*

thing of the past, and the runner has obtained a fair mastery over his ski.

Only those who have attempted to struggle through deep soft snow, snow up to the waist, snow that absolutely defies progress, can understand the sense of triumph that one feels when one stands upon one's ski, no longer a feeble floundering mortal imprisoned and oppressed by the overwhelming might of the snow, but transformed as if by magic into some light and airy being, as buoyant as the winged Mercury. The wilderness of snow, which to the wayfarer without ski was an impenetrable barrier,

there a swing, choosing one's own country; to hear the soft hiss of the frost crystals brushing past one's ski, as the upturned tips breast the crisp snow—these are sensations the delight of which none but a ski-runner can enjoy or even understand, and certainly none, not even a ski-runner, can adequately express in language.

But how long, one may ask, does it take for a beginner to reach that blessed state when he can hope to feel sensations like these? The answer to this question depends on many things—on the age, aptitude and fitness of the beginner, on the



*Photo by]*

*[Sport & General.*

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE JUMPING COMPETITION AT HOLMENKOLLEN, IN NORWAY.

condition of the snow and weather, on the nature of the instruction, if any, which the novice receives. But this, at least, may be said: that under the most favourable conditions a beginner should with a week's diligent practice be able to run over good snow and fairly easy country with only an occasional fall. In three weeks he or she, as the case may be, should be a competent partner on whole-day expeditions.

It is a common failing in young and inexperienced ski-runners to overrate their powers and to embark on long cross-country runs when they should still be practising on the nursery slopes. Lured by the ease with which they can keep up with experienced ski-runners in the ascent (for once the elementary technique of the ski has been mastered, the business of climbing uphill, following in some ski-trail, is mostly a matter of muscle and lungs), they fail to realise that the real test comes when the descent begins. Then muscle and lungs are of little avail, and a beginner who has not learnt to run at a fair speed without falling, and at the same time to control his direction as well as his pace, will soon find himself

utterly exhausted and a disagreeable drag upon the rest of the party.

Some years ago the Federal Council of British Ski Clubs drew up a series of standard ski tests, first, second and third class, which furnish a reliable gauge of ski-ing proficiency. The third-class test was designed primarily to prove the candidate's ability for simple cross-country running, and anyone who has passed this test may, as a rule, be reckoned a sufficiently good runner for an ordinary day's expedition.

The art of ski-ing, so far at least as its practice by British ski-runners is concerned, has undergone considerable development since its first introduction into Switzerland. Just as in skating, so in ski-ing there have grown up various styles and various schools of thought.

In the early days the ski-runner sallied forth with a single stout ash pole, some six or seven feet long, exactly similar to that which Regnard describes the Laplanders as using two hundred and fifty years ago. This pole served, not only as a useful prop to maintain or restore the balance, but also as a means of steering and as a brake for

stopping. Without his pole the ski-runner of those days was as helpless as a cripple without his crutch. His only method of altering course whilst running was by means of the rudimentary stemming-turn, largely aided by the use of the pole. But now all that is changed; the pole has been discarded, and in its place the ski-runner holds in each hand a slender bamboo cane. He does not lean on these—his balance is independent of any such adventitious aids. He only uses them for an occasional prod at the snow; at other times he trails them or holds them as he pleases for use in an emergency.

And when he wants to turn, he has at least four or five different ways in which he can perform the desired manoeuvre—tele-mark turns, christianias, lifted stemming-turns, jump-turns and what-not. The discussions and controversies which have centred round the comparative ethics and dynamics of these various methods and manoeuvres would fill many volumes. Suffice it to say that the twin stick school has now completely triumphed over the single pole school, and that no ski-runner is now considered worthy of the name who cannot achieve without the aid of his sticks a descent of 1,500 feet in ten minutes and at least four continuous stemming-turns and four continuous telemarks on a slope of between 15 to 20 degrees gradient.

Jumping on ski has not attained in Switzerland anything like the vogue which it enjoys in Norway or Sweden; yet it is an accomplishment without which no one can call himself a truly complete or proficient ski-runner.

For ski-jumping a slope of suitable length and gradient has to be carefully selected. The stretch of slope from top to bottom should be not less than 200 yards. A strong wooden platform is built out from the slope one-third of the way down, and covered with well-beaten snow. The gradient of the slope above the platform is usually about 15 degrees, and steepens to 30 to 35 degrees at the point where an average long jumper will alight below the platform. The length of the jump is measured from the edge of the take-off platform to the point at which the hindmost ski touches the alighting track with the part immediately below the binding. Anything over 80 feet may be reckoned a good jump. But many jumps of over 150 feet have been achieved by champions. The jump which at present

holds the record was made by a Norwegian, Nels Nelson, in the United States in the winter of 1921-1922. He covered the amazing distance of 212 feet.

Ski-running, like all other great sports, has its risks, but the percentage of accidents is very small. Broadly speaking, ski-ing accidents are due to two causes—(1) lack of control on the part of the ski-runner; (2) lack of mountain and snow craft. By far the greater number of accidents occur from the first of these causes; but, as a rule, they are not more serious than a strain or a sprain, or, at worst, a broken bone. Fatal accidents in ski-ing arise from causes closely similar to those which are responsible for fatalities in mountaineering. First and most formidable, there is the avalanche. A ski-runner caught in an avalanche is at a serious disadvantage, for unless he can quickly rid himself of his ski, he is inevitably anchored and engulfed in the snow. Freed from his ski, there is, at any rate, some chance of his being swept down on the surface of the moving mass.

The concealed crevasse is another formidable danger which lurks in the path of those who go in for the fascinating game of glacier ski-ing. This risk is largely countered by roping, a precaution which, however, materially reduces one of the primary pleasures of ski-ing, namely, absolute freedom and independence of motion.

This somewhat cursory review of ski-ing would not be complete without some mention of the fact that ski-ing has for many years past formed part of the military training of the Norwegian and Swedish armies, and had already, prior to 1914, been adopted for the training of a special ski-corps in most of the other European countries whose frontiers are snowbound in winter. During the Great War opportunity for the use of ski-mounted soldiers occurred mainly upon the Italian and Austrian and Russian frontiers. Towards the end of the War a British ski contingent was equipped at Murmansk for operations against mobile units of Finns whom the Germans were employing on that front. But, owing probably to insufficient training and experience in the use of ski, the experiment does not appear to have been altogether successful. For reconnoitring and dispatch-running, however, and for other special work, there can be no question as to the value of ski-ing as an aid to military operations in snow-bound country.



"Give an old man a Christmas dinner!"

# HOLIDAY ISLAND

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLIER

## I.—CHRISTMAS 1920.

ON the Christmas morning of 1920 I, John Armitage, ex-temporary captain in the 9th Dullshires, and since the War mostly at a loose end, was walking under the cliffs at Endby, with a waterproof over my big coat and a woollen scarf wrapped round my neck. I think I went out mainly because the weather wasn't fit to go out in. I am that sort of man. I always had the feeling that a heavy wind blew things off my mind, and there was a lot to blow off. I had gone to Endby and

taken the lonely little cottage just behind Constitution Hill to forget things, and especially Marian Davis.

I thought that no other fool would be out in the gusts of rain and sleet, but presently I came upon an old man raking in the *débris* of a landslide. When he noticed me he scraped the mud off his feet with an oyster shell, dusted his hands together, and brushed his greatcoat with them, and then dusted his hands again. After that he stumbled toward me.

"For God's sake," he begged, "give an old man a Christmas dinner!"

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"I'm not keeping up Christmas," I told him, "but I've a dinner. I'll give you some on condition that you go when it's over."

He was feeble as well as old, and, I judged, ill. I chose the easiest track up the cliff, but the loose earth slid beneath our feet, and he was short of breath. So I took hold of his arm and pulled him up; went at his pace to the cottage; helped him remove his big coat, and sat him in front of the fire while I cooked the meal, fried steak and potatoes, and apple tart warmed up. A woman in the village made some pastry for me twice a week.

With his earth-soiled overcoat off, he was not the tramp that I expected. He had a watch, and wore clothes which in their time had been good. He spoke like a person of fair education. He saw me studying him, and answered my thoughts.

"Yes," he said, "I've had money. Got plenty now, if I could get at it. It's—well, say, abroad. I'm too ill to travel. My next journey they'll have to carry me, feet first. . . . Like a Christmas story, eh? Buried treasure and all that. I've a few pounds hidden near us. That's what I came here for; but I was too weak. That cursed landslip has buried my treasury. I'll get it to-morrow, and pay for my dinner out of it."

"I don't want payment," I said briefly. "I didn't want company either. That's why I warned you that you can't stay here. It's only half a mile to the village. You can easily walk there after dinner, and pay one of the cottagers for a lodging—out of your hidden treasure."

I didn't believe in it, of course; thought it was probably an excuse to borrow upon. But I didn't mean to lend, or to let him remain after the meal.

However, after dinner, he began to go to sleep in his seat, leaning against the table. So I lifted him back to the armchair in front of the fire, and he slept there till tea. I put his cup and plate on a small chair beside him and roused him.

"You said I was to go," he remarked.

"It's snowing," I said. "I can't turn you out in it. I had a father once."

"Nearly old enough to be your grandfather," he told me. "Sixty-four. That's not so old nowadays. People live longer than they used to, they say. More careful of themselves; but I haven't been. That's why I've come to this pass. Just carelessness, or over-carefulness. Comes to the

same thing. How about you? You're more like four-and-twenty."

"Twenty-seven," I told him.

"And you're here all alone. Hiding?"

"No," I snapped. "Forgetting."

"And that's what you never do," he muttered.

He raised the tea-cup with a shaking hand, and spilt the tea over his legs.

"Here," I offered, "I'll help you. . . . You forget what you ought to remember, but you remember what you want to forget."

"That's it. . . . A woman, of course."

"I don't ask your history," I growled. "You can leave me alone, if you'd do me a kindness."

"Mightn't be a kindness," he thought. "The more you keep things to yourself, the more they stick and stick in. Open confession is good for the soul. Comes out of a prayer-book, doesn't it? And curiosity is the curse of humanity. While we live we ask questions. I haven't much longer to ask questions. So I take my last chances. . . . About the woman, my boy."

"Perhaps," I decided, "it will get it off my mind for a bit to say it out."

I put some more logs on the fire, turned down the lamp a little, and squatted on the hearthrug. I told him about Marian.

"I don't say that she wasn't justified," I summed up. "I *didn't* settle down after I was demobbed, and I *did* plenty of things that I shouldn't. You don't suppose that a man is going to live in hell for a few years, and come out an angel, do you?"

"No flesh-and-blood woman wants one," he declared. "She didn't turn you off for *that*. Plain enough how she looked at it. Your devilry took a form that chucked up a decent berth, and didn't leave you much prospect of getting another that would keep Mrs. Devil in reasonable comfort, not to speak of half a dozen little devils. She——" He was taken with a fit of coughing—horrible coughing. "Plague this cough! Seems to tear rents in me. Well, that's how she looked at it, eh?"

"That's it," I growled. "She turned me down because I had no money, only what I'm living on now. I never shall have."

"You don't know," he said. "You don't know. I could tell you where to find plenty. I'll never fetch it myself now. . . . There's ten pounds hidden in these cliffs, but there's been a landslide. You've seen that for yourself. I can't get at it. . . ."

"Ten pounds!" I laughed. "That

wouldn't keep Mrs. Devil and several little devilkins, not to mention Mr. Devil. What's the use of odd pounds?"

"It isn't odd pounds," he asserted, "or odd hundreds. Say—let me think. At the start it was eighteen thousand. That was near ten years ago, when I stored it. Since then I have taken—this cough hacks the sense out of me, and the memory—say, I've spent four thousand. That's fourteen thousand left. It's all set down in the book in the—in the . . . Confound this cough! . . . Fourteen thousand. You could invest it safely and bring in eight or nine hundred a year."

"Why didn't *you*?" I inquired.

"Ah, why didn't I? That's *my* story! Wouldn't do for me to be known a rich man, to have investments standing to my name. It's in gold and notes and jewels—mostly jewels. I turned it out of investments into them, and I hid them in . . . Never mind. Perhaps I'll tell you later how to find it. . . . This cough! . . . It's down in a note in my pocket-book. I put it in a cryptogram, a sort of puzzle. You know the kind of thing, I expect. It's easy when you know the key, but nobody could read it unless he knew that. Well, take 'em a long time to ferret it out, and no use unless they knew the place. See?"

"I don't see why you couldn't trust your memory without a cryptogram," I said, "if you had to hide it."

"Had to hide it," he asserted, "and not much time to choose. Might have moved it away afterwards, but didn't want to carry it about with me, or to settle down in one place. Better if I had. . . . Well, I didn't. As to trusting my memory, I might have; but the spot is only marked out by boulders and stones, and I thought if I was ill and had to send—someone else. . . . Dead now, the only one I'd trust. . . . Of course, if it was written down, it had got to be in some way that everybody couldn't read. A fool's plan and got out of a story-book."

"Why don't you go and get some, if you need it?" I asked.

"Ah, that's just it. Last time I went I had an idea that someone suspected me and watched me. So I didn't like going again—put it off and put it off. It ought to be done in the summer. Then you can go in a crowd and not so likely to be noticed. . . . This infernal cough. . . . Slap my back! Slap my ba-ack! . . ."

He didn't seem able to speak for some

time after this bout of coughing, and I let him be for a while.

"How did you come by it?" I asked presently.

He didn't answer; seemed to choke; tried to cough, and couldn't.

"You," he gasped, "you . . . Only one . . . Good to me. . . . It's—it's at . . . I'm going . . ."

"I'll fetch a doctor," I said.

I ran all the way to the doctor's, and drove back with him; but the old man was dead when we arrived.

There was a slip of paper in his hand. The doctor did not notice that. He had pencilled on it. "Holiday Islan—" The pencil had stopped in beginning a "d."

I said they could leave him at my place and I'd pay for his funeral. I went through his pockets before the old woman came to lay him out. There wasn't much in them, except an old pocket-book, or much in that except two faded photographs—an old woman and a young one—and a half-sheet of note-paper covered with figures.

These were the figures:—

552521331155542512254455332245114224  
25535121553354252345442455532123414225  
31553145115355332321122544344455335455  
45442551215455542521553325215355553334  
5355252544545544255334323355.

For nearly a week I spent some hours daily trying to make the cryptogram out, but I did it rather to pass the time than with any idea that there really was a hidden treasure, or that I would seek for it, if there were. If the old man had fourteen thousand pounds, it was pretty clear that he had not come by the money honestly. My wildness had not taken the form of dishonesty, and was not likely to do so. I was the son of a British Civil Servant, the most meticulously honest class in the world, whatever its failings. My father had brought me up to regard financial uprightness as just a matter of course, like breathing.

Anyhow, I did not solve the cryptogram, and I soon found good reasons for putting it aside. It was probably a hoax, I decided; and if I *must* work—love of work was not among my failings!—I might as well labour at something remunerative as at a humbugging puzzle, I argued. So I stowed the paper away in a drawer, and wrote rubbishy little articles and paragraphs for the weekly papers, and occasionally for the dailies. Sufficient were accepted to pay my rent and feed me. I knew that I should do better in Town, but I elected to stay where I was,



out of the despised world. I didn't like the solitude, but I was a soured and pig-headed man, who wouldn't admit that he had taken a wrong course, not even to himself. Toward the end of the year, when the short days came back, my loneliness grew appalling, and to confirm myself in my resolution I stuck a portrait of Marian up over my mantel.

"To remind me that a man can trust no one, and is best alone," I hissed. "And, anyhow, you're nice to look at!"

## II.—CHRISTMAS 1921.

Upon my second Christmas morning at Endby I felt as if I could scream from loneliness. I tried to write, but couldn't sit still; kept jumping up and walking about the room; raged at the portrait and shook my fist at it; laid hands on it once to put it in the fire, but, after looking at it for a time, dusted it and put it back over the mantel.

"What's the good of humbugging myself?" I muttered. (I had got into the habit of talking to myself.) "I hate her, but I shall always like her. Why does God let people be born into the world to ache their lives out? He's no right to do it. Three Christmases in the trenches, and one in a cattle-truck—that was worse—and now this. And this is worse still. . . . I'll go out for a walk. I might happen to meet somebody. Last year I did. Poor old devil, with his silly cryptogram! I wonder how much he managed to borrow from first to last on it? I suppose it doesn't mean anything at all, but I'll have another go at it after dinner just to pass the afternoon. Seasonable! Old dad always brought home puzzles at Christmas-time. How the old boy liked them! He was good at guessing things. I'm not—or at anything. If I'd guessed Marian right, perhaps. . . . Oh, hell! I'll go out."

I wandered over the hill, walked four miles along the cliffs, and came back on the beach below. It was cold, and there had been a little snow. The beach was an untrodden white world, except for my footsteps. Somehow I felt ashamed of them when I looked back, as if they marred a peaceful universe, which was just what I did, I told myself, with my life.

I met no one, not even a poor old man to ask to dinner. I believe I should have invited the most loathsome tramp, just for company. I threw myself into a chair, with my head in my hands, when I was indoors.

I seemed to be two men, who argued with each other. "I won't give in," one said. "I can't stand this," said the other. "You'll get used to it," the first declared. "You'll end by shooting yourself," the other warned me. "A man should be sufficient to himself," No. 1 urged. "Since he can trust no one, he's only safe alone." "It's unnatural," No. 2 argued. "The universe would end if man lived alone." "A good thing, too," No. 1 scoffed. "That's only words," No. 2 answered. "If you're lonely," No. 1 conceded, "have a dog." "A dog!" laughed No. 2—no, *that* was the portrait over the smoky fireplace. For the moment I swear it seemed to move and laugh Marian's laugh. "A dog! . . . Oh, Jack! A dog!"

"I'll put you in the flames!" I cried, and jumped to my feet.

"Do it!" the photograph challenged. "Do it!" And somehow I couldn't.

"I will," I vowed, "if I don't feel different after dinner."

Dinner seemed to make me still more depressed. I kept remembering that last year I had the poor old man for Christmas company, a broken-down old man, no doubt a rascal, a thief or a liar—still, humanity to my humanity.

After dinner I did not want to burn Marian's photograph; I felt too hurt myself to want to hurt anything, even an old memory. I got out the cryptogram and some sheets of paper, and sat by the table—which I pulled close to the fire—trying to solve it. Probably two figures were taken to indicate a letter. The first five figures only were used. That gave twenty-five pairs, as 1 might be followed by 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, and so on with the others. The alphabet was only one letter more, and one of the 26 letters—z—or perhaps q—could be dispensed with. Why shouldn't 11 represent a, and 12 b, and so on? I tried that, but it made the solution begin y j f, which was absurd. A little cryptogram was too difficult for me, I jeered at myself, and I had thought it easy to solve the puzzle of a woman! I had made y j f of Marian, and blamed the fault of the misreader on her.

The thought of Marian rather put the figures out of my head. I thought of her for a long time. I do not know how long, for I fell asleep.

When I woke she stood at the far end of the mantelshelf, with her elbow on it, wearing a little close hat, and a fur collar turned up round her neck. I remembered once

telling her that her little head on a fur collar looked like a jewel on the velvet of its case. She was a small woman and fragile and dainty. . . . She stood looking down at me very seriously, as I rubbed my eyes and tried to wake fully. I am a slow waker, and at first I wasn't sure that she wasn't a dream.

"So," she said, "you keep me over your mantelshelf."

She waved her hand—little hand—at her photograph.

"As a warning," I muttered. "Well, so I told myself."

"You would, wouldn't you? If you only kept it there for that, you'd have put me in the fire long ago, in one of your tempers. Those tempers!" She shook her head—little head. "I don't think it's *quite* for that, Jack?"

She looked at me. Her eyes blinked.

I just fell out of my chair at her feet and knelt there, held to her dress and put my face in it.

"Poor old Jack!" she said softly. "Poor old Jack!" She put her hand on my head. Pray God I may never forget the touch of that kind hand. "I have only just found out where you were, and what you were doing. I couldn't let you throw away a man's life. After all—it was foolish and wicked to act like this, but it meant that you cared very much in your fierce way, didn't it?" I nodded without lifting my head. "It was hard to come, Jack, but . . ."

"Marian," I said, "it makes me look up to you as I never thought to look up to anything in the world. You're big, Marian. Big! And I—I'm just your slave now. May I kiss you?"

"Yes, Jack. It's no use pretending I don't care. I care very much for you. It was only that we see things in different ways. We can only walk together if one will go the other's road. Well, I will go your road, Jack, to be with you. That means that my life is in your hands, to make happy or wretched, good or bad. I thought, perhaps, the Jack who had me to take care of would—would try to be—as good as you can, please, Jack, won't you?"

"Oh, girl! Look here, Marian. I'll give way in turn, or always toss for it, when we don't agree. I'll give you all the turns, if you like. Even if you are wrong. I know you were right that time. It was my infernal temper."

"I don't like you to swear, Jack . . ."

"I won't, then. You'll rule me with your

little 'don't likes.' Little humbug, aren't you? Darling little humbug! Oh, Marry, I was so lonely, so lonely! I felt, 'whacked to the world,' you know. Now I feel as if I could carry the world on my back, and you in my arms! Like this!"

I picked her up and jiggled round the room, holding her aloft.

"Silly boy! Silly boy! What's that on the table?"

I told her the story of the old man, and his reputed treasure, and how he had left me the cryptogram as a clue.

"You used to be good at puzzles, and all that sort of thing," I remarked. "I expect you'd soon guess it."

"What's the use?" she demurred. "You don't know where Holiday Island is. I expect there are dozens of places called it. And you do know that he couldn't have come by the money honestly, or he wouldn't have hid it like that, if he *did* hide anything. I don't expect there was really any treasure at all. He just made the story up, I should think, to get money out of people, or Christmas dinners. I am glad you gave him one, though, even if he was a wicked old man. It's a good job that some kind people look after the bad ones, isn't it?" She smiled up at me. "Anyhow, it isn't much use guessing the old cryptogram, is it?"

"No," I agreed. "I've got a new puzzle to guess now. Help me to be good to you. I—I know I'm a pig-headed fool, but—God do by me as I do by you! Oh, *dear* Marian!"

\* \* \* \* \*

I went back to Town to live, and after a good deal of difficulty obtained a regular berth in an office, and did a little bit of writing in the evenings. We meant to save up to furnish two or three rooms before we married, and we didn't expect we should do it for over a year; but Marian began to ail. She was never very strong. She had to leave her employment. (She was an orphan, and worked for her living.) She demurred to taking help from her *fiancé*. So I married her to make her share what I earned, and we lived in lodgings. My money was sufficient to exist upon, but it wasn't enough to keep two people properly when one was an invalid. The doctor said that she principally needed generous diet and sea air. I sometimes tried to make out that I'd had meals before I came in—that someone had treated me to lunch, and all that sort of thing—but she used to laugh and shake her head, and try to give me the best of every-



"'The heart!' she cried. 'The heart!'"

thing. Somehow she took the hardness and arrogance out of me. At the best I'm not much of a chap, but I'll fare all right if I'm judged by the way I treated Marian. She grew softer and sweeter, and weaker; ought to have the winter abroad in a warm climate, the doctor said, or, better still, a long sea-voyage in warm parts. It was principally her lungs, but she was anæmic, too—wasted to a shadow. Sometimes I felt as if I should go mad over it.

"If anything happens to me, Jack, boy," she said on Christmas Eve, "you must think that I was a lucky girl. You have given me a year of real love and kindness, such a year as most women never have at all. That's the time that women reckon, Jack. I shall have lived more than some who make old bones."

"Marian!" I cried. "My little Marian! I—I—oh, my God! Why can't I—why can't

I spend all my life in a year or two to get things for you? Marian? Perhaps that's what the old man came to me for. Suppose his story was true, and I can solve the cryptogram, and get the money? We don't *know* that it wasn't his properly. I'd risk that to save you with it."



"I—don't—  
know," she  
said. "I—I seem too  
young to die."

"Oh, my dear!" I  
choked. "My dear!"

"And I don't know  
what you'd do with-  
out me. I'm an expense, but—"

"Don't, dear," I begged, "don't!"

"I think, perhaps, if we didn't *know* it  
wasn't his, we might use a little of it," she  
thought. "Let's look at the old thing,  
Jack."

I got the paper out; but she fell asleep  
in her chair, and I carried her up to bed.  
Then I went downstairs and sat at the table,  
struggling with the cryptogram. I let out  
the fire to save coals, and worked in my  
overcoat. The waits sang in the street. I  
went upstairs and put some clothes over  
her ears to stop the noise waking her. . . .

Went up afterwards  
and took the clothes  
from her face—it was  
warm and flushed now  
—and put them and  
more over her body.  
She loved warmth like  
a little cat—like a  
little cat. . . . My Marian!  
. . . . I went downstairs  
again and toiled over the  
cryptogram. I heard the  
church bells, and knew  
that it was Christmas

morning. "Her last Christmas unless I  
can do more for her," I muttered. Then  
I think I fell asleep.

### III.—CHRISTMAS 1922.

The clock on the mantel tinkled out three  
just as I woke. I cursed myself for wasting  
time and gas, and turned to the paper again;  
but I was shivering with cold, too chilly to  
think. I got up and swung my arms, dancing  
at the same time to warm myself. I looked  
like a lunatic in the overmantel. Then I  
put a shawl over my shoulders and a  
hearthrug round my legs, and sat down  
again.

"If only," I thought, "I had some idea  
what words to look for. If he had divided  
the thing into words, even, I might find a  
'the' or an 'a,' and get a start like that.  
He spoke of the place being marked by  
'boulders' or 'stones.' Suppose I look

for them. How shall I know them when I find them? Well, they're the likeliest words to occur more than once. Let me see."

I found a group of ten figures which occurred twice:—

5455454425.

"If it's two figures to a letter," I thought, "that's five letters—'stone' . . . If 54 is s, 55 would be t; and if 45 is o, n is the one before, and should be 44. If e is 25. . . I've got it. I'll swear I've got it!"

I wrote out a key like this:—

21	—	a
22	—	b
23	—	c
24	—	d
25	—	e
31	—	f

and so on to u, which went back to 11 with v 12, etc.

I applied this key to the figures, and it gave intelligible words:—

Tea hut.

Seventh boulder.

Path.

Second track left.

Fourth cave.

Ninth stone past seat.

Heart.

Thirteen stone right.

I sat blinking at the translation with sleepy eyes. It was past four o'clock, and I was very tired. My mind seemed to be getting drowsy.

"Now," I decided, "I'll go to bed. I haven't gone so far to fail in the rest. I'll get a day or two's holiday, and I'll spend it at the British Museum, hunting up Holiday Island, and get there somehow. Heaven knows how I'll find the money! I'll do it *somehow*!"

I turned out the light and went upstairs to bed, kissed Marian without waking her, and went to sleep. It was she who woke me in the morning.

"A happy Christmas, dear," she said.

"And many more together!" I cried, and sat up in bed and flourished my solution. "There will be now. I've solved it. I shall find Holiday Island when the libraries are open after Boxing Day, and I'll raise the money to get there somehow—earn it, beg it, borrow it on this. . . That will be it, I expect. It means this. Look at it. Here, you mustn't sit up in the cold. Well, let me wrap you round, then. You'll be all right if I find that money. I shall take you to wherever the doctor says is best for a

seedy little missus. You'll soon be all right then."

"All right," she said, "if you find it *soon*." She sighed. "Don't harp on it too much, Jack. Somehow I'm afraid you won't be in time. And perhaps it was stolen, if we knew."

"We don't know," I told her; "and you see, if it were, we've no means of finding out the person it was stolen from."

"We might——"

"No, we mightn't," I interrupted, "whatever it is. If you were going to say 'advertise,' we'd get hundreds of claimants, and we couldn't test them. So it will go to doctor a little lady who's—I won't make you any vainer. You just lie down and be covered up. Happy Christmas, darling!"

We were happy that morning—so happy that Marian said it made her feel afraid that something would happen.

At half-past ten it happened.

"A Mr. Garrett would like to see you, sir," the landlady announced.

"We don't know a Mr. Garrett," Marian thought. "Jack, you don't think——? I seemed to have a presentiment!"

"Old Sixpennyworth of Fancies!" I said. "Show him up, please, Mrs. Brown."

He was a very old man and very shabby, pleasant and kindly, but a trifle rambling in speech and in manner.

"I apologise for troubling you on Christmas morning," he said, "but the matter is of vital importance to me. I will explain the importance very briefly, so as to spare your time. Thirteen years ago I was well-to-do—Garrett and Brand, Wholesale Merchants. My partner, Charles Brand, disappeared with all our money—and more. He had raised a deal upon the credit of the firm; sold or pledged our securities."

Marian clasped her hands suddenly.

"Yes," I said, "yes. I don't quite see how I come into it. Thirteen years ago I was a boy at school."

"But Mr. Garrett will explain," Marian said. "Of course, if you could help him to trace his money, you would." She looked appealingly at me. I knew then that I should have to tell him. It would kill Marian to lose her faith in me. She had better die from anything rather than from that.

"Will you go on, Mr. Garrett?" I said.

"I have been trying to track him for thirteen years," he said. "I hadn't any money for detectives. You see, our assets weren't sufficient to pay the creditors in

full. There was four thousand three hundred and eighteen pounds two shillings and sevenpence short. Even now there is still two thousand five hundred pounds to pay. My income has been small, especially since the War."

"You mean—you did not go bankrupt?"

"My creditors accepted a composition; but I have paid them what I could of the deficiency, except Barlow and Thomas. They refuse to take any more. Barlow was an old schoolfellow of mine, so was Brand. One of my nieces married a detective, and he took the matter up last year. He traced Brand to a man who called himself Smithson. He wandered about the country, and there were reasons for thinking that he lived upon a store of money, from which he took a portion from time to time. He talked when he had drink, and threw out hints of that kind. Well, Smithson was traced to Endby, where he died in the house of a young gentleman, who had taken pity on him and given him a Christmas dinner. If we are not mistaken, that gentleman was you."

"Well?" I asked hoarsely.

"We thought that it was just possible that before he died he said something, or even left some paper which gave a clue to what he had done with the balance of the money?"

I often wonder what I should have said if Marian had not been there, or if she had not put her hand upon my shoulder. Even then it was some seconds before I answered.

"Yes," I owned at last, "he said that he had a store of money in a place abroad. He gave me no indication how he had come by it. He also gave me a cryptogram which he said indicated its hiding-place."

"He solved the cryptogram last night!" Marian cried. "He'll show you."

"I will hand over the solution with the cryptogram," I said, "when I have verified your account, Mr. Garrett. Excuse me for being careful. Of course, if your ownership of the money is proved, there is nothing else to be said; but if the ownership is doubtful. . . . My wife has been ailing for a while. The doctor says that she must go abroad. There is no other hope. I wanted the money for that."

"The first claim on the money," he said, "is the creditors. If there is more than enough to satisfy their outstanding account—as I told you, that is about two thousand five hundred pounds—the next claim shall be your wife's."

"We have no claim," I told him, "but for *her* I will even take charity."

"Not necessarily charity," he said. "Apart from what was due to the creditors—say four thousand pounds—half of any money taken would be Brand's. His share of the value of the concern. He may have left something out of that. I accept your statement that he left it to you. You say that the place is abroad—"

"I understand so," I told him. "We haven't been able to trace it. Perhaps you can help in that. It's urgent—very urgent to me. You see, the doctor said two months ago that she"—I touched Marian's hand on my shoulder—"ought to go abroad *at once*. But we hadn't any money, and couldn't borrow it."

"I think I can," he said, "for that."

"But there mayn't be anything left," she cried, "or we mayn't find the place!"

"Then," he told her, "it will be a loan; and your good husband will pay me back when he can, if we don't find anything in the place abroad."

"He called it Holiday Island," I said.

"Holiday Island!" The old man sprang to his feet. "Holiday Island! He said that! It isn't abroad. It's here—at Dittlebury, where I live, where he was brought up and lived till he robbed me."

"But," I objected, "Dittlebury is inland, and there's no river."

"Holiday Island," he said, "is the local name for an artificial island—an imitation of the wild—in the middle of an artificial lake in the grounds of Darely Hall. My old friend Barlow has bought the place. He has made money—a deal of money. They always allowed the townspeople to go there for tea-parties in the summer. Barlow will let me go at any time. To-day . . . Come down with me."

"I don't know if it will hurt Marian to travel," I doubted.

"It will hurt me to stay behind," she declared. "And if I get tired, you can carry me! You did last Christmas Day, you know, and said as if you felt you could take the world on your shoulder."

"I feel like that now," I told her.

"And I'm lighter now."

"Don't, Marry, don't!"

"We'll soon make her plump again," the old gentleman declared, "whether we find anything or not."

We arrived at Dittlebury by the two seven, and took a cab to the Hall. Mr. Barlow not only gave his consent to our visiting the

island, but came with us, bringing electric torches and tools. He was about Mr. Garrett's age, but much more energetic and competent, and seemed to take a great fancy to Marian, and perhaps to me. He had no children of his own, he apologised.

The island was a wonderful place, constructed artificially, at the whim of a millionaire owner years before, so as to seem many times larger than it was. It had forests and lions' dens (with stuffed lions) and extinct animals (in plaster), and winding walks and caves, and even prehistoric men (also plaster), and dozens of caves in what looked like rocks.

There was a cosy place for refreshments, built like a huge thatched hut, near the only landing-place. To the right of it there was planned a rocky shore with about twenty large boulders along the edge. Opposite the seventh boulder a path led up a "cliff." Many tracks turned off this. We took the second to the left. This passed a number of caves. We entered the fourth and came to a seat. We were rather puzzled about the "stones" mentioned in the cryptogram. The walls were continuous (plaster) rock, and the floor was cement, though carefully made uneven to imitate earth. Barlow thought that the cementing had probably been done, or re-done, after the plan was made out, and that the "stones" had been covered. We were discussing this rather disconsolately when Marian suddenly clapped her hands.

"The heart!" she cried. "The heart!"

She pointed to a roughly cut heart upon the wall opposite to the seat. There were still rougher letters in it. A.D.—N.T.

"I wonder what he meant by them?" she said.

"I shouldn't think he cut them," Mr. Barlow said; "found them there. Couple of picnic-party lovers. Arthur Day and Nellie Townsend very likely. She was an old flame of Brand's, so he'd have noticed them. Those stones are what bother me. It would be a nuisance to have this cement hacked up, but if I must—"

"Flash your light on the ceiling, sir," I begged.

He carried the big electric torch, and had taken the lead in the search throughout.

The ceiling, however, proved blank.

"The floor," Marian suggested, "to the right."

We went on carefully examining the floor, and suddenly Mr. Garrett cried out:

"What's that? Look! Those bulges

must have been stones before they were cemented. On that piece that's made a triangle by three cracks across the cement. Twelve bulges, anyhow. This might be a thirteenth. . . ."

"No, no!" Marian screamed. "It doesn't say the thirteenth stone. It says the thirteen stone is *right*. It's a whole stone, with thirteen bulges on it."

"Looks as if the whole piece might lift up," Mr. Barlow said. "Let me get this chisel in one of the cracks."

It *was* a whole stone, not cement, and it *did* lift; and there was a box beneath, and what we were looking for was in the box.

It was very nearly fourteen thousand pounds when the jewels were realised, and they reckoned out that three thousand pounds belonged to Marian and me. At the time of Brand's defalcations and disappearance the business was worth about fourteen thousand pounds, after satisfying its creditors, and half of that was his. He had spent four thousand pounds. Therefore—so they said—three thousand pounds remained for us; but the exact settlement was not made until long afterwards, when it did not matter very much to us, for Mr. Barlow and his dear old wife provided for all our needs.

"We shall always think of this as the happiest Christmas Day of our lives," Marian declared, as we were taking tea at their house.

But I shall always think of it as the worst. Just after tea she fainted, and Mrs. Barlow put her to bed and sent for the doctor. The doctor said he didn't think she'd last through the night, and that, anyhow, going abroad had been left too late. Barlow wired for two specialists and arranged for a special train to bring them. At the end of Christmas Day they had not yet arrived, and I was sitting beside the bedside holding Marian's hand.

"If—I go—Jackie," she muttered. "I want you—to promise—to buy lots of things—for yourself. . . . I don't mind—so much—now—you've got—the money."

"I don't want the money," I sobbed, "I want my wife—my little wife!"

"If there's any power on earth," Barlow declared—he kept looking in to "buck" me up, as he called it—"you shall keep her. Special train—special ship—special anything. . . . You're an honest chap, Armitage, a good chap!"

"It isn't I," I said. "It's Marian. She's

made a man of me. . . . Do you hear that, old girl ? ”

She smiled up at me.

“Except for dying,” she said, “I’m very—happy—Jack !”

Good old Barlow threw his arms on the bedrail then and put his face in his hands.

#### IV.—THE CHRISTMAS TO BE.

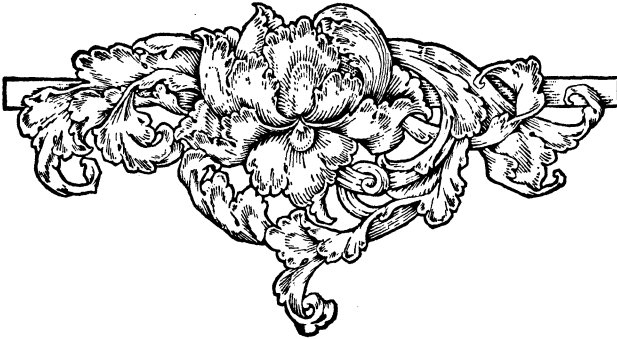
Marian didn’t die. The specialist said that there was “just time, with the help of God,” if I took her away at once. Barlow sent us half across England in a motor-car three days later to catch a ship. Mrs. Barlow had spent the day before in and out of a motor, buying an outfit for Marian. She is a “well woman” now, though she may never be very strong, and must live abroad for some time yet ; but she says that this will really be our happiest Christmas,

because “a little stranger is coming to spend it with us.” The Barlows are coming out to spend it with us, too. They seem rather to have adopted us, and talk of the “little stranger” as if it will be a grandchild.

“And just think, dear,” Marian says, “how it all comes from doing right. If you hadn’t been kind to the old man, you wouldn’t have had the cryptogram ; and if you hadn’t been honest in giving up the secret, you wouldn’t have found Holiday Island in time ; and, if you hadn’t, you wouldn’t have me ! It’s all through your goodness.”

“Ah !” I say. “And how about a little lady who came to me two Christmases ago ? No one else ever had the key to translate me into a good man.”

“Sometimes,” she says, “I wonder whether Something sent me—Something that has the key to us all !”



## WINTER MUSIC.

**H**IGH in the elm the storm-cock sings,  
The song-thrush on the thorn :

Theirs is the music Winter brings,  
Sweet with the news of Christmas morn,  
And a host of half-remembered things—  
Joy by vanished childhood worn  
Like robes of ancient kings.

Hark how bold, every note thrice told,  
“Never ! Never ! Never !” each wild throat rings,  
“Never shall hope grow old !”

RICHARD CHURCH.



# LARGESSE

By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM HATHERELL

RETURNING from a morning of strenuous shopping, Ruth Selton went straight to her room. Tired and dishevelled, she longed for the luxury of well-brushed hair and a rest-gown. These attained, she ordered coffee to be brought to her sitting-room, drew a chair to the open fireplace, and drifted into a mood of languor.

The dusk of an early winter afternoon stole presently into the room; firelight threaded it with ribbons of light that singled out first one and then another item of the room's contents—pictures, books, bric-à-brac on a table at her side, the silver-mounted calendar. She bent forward suddenly, staring at the calendar. Languor fled from her. The firelight flickered and lifted again into brilliance, so that the date was clear against its background of shadow.

Tuesday, November 12th.

Ruth Selton was laughing beneath her breath. The firelight showed her arch and dimpling. It showed, too, the exquisite curve of profile and figure, the heavy, lustrous coils of her hair.

"I wonder——"

Speaking above her breath, she caught the words back as the door opened and her friend Mary Scott came into the room.

"Dreaming as usual," Mary commented. "Don't fall asleep, Ruth. Let's have the lights on." She touched electric buttons, and the shadows fled at the onslaught of illumination.

"On the contrary," Ruth declaimed, "so far from dreaming, I was very much awake. I had just realised the significance of the date."

"The date?" Mary drew a chair close to Ruth's. "What of it?"

"Tuesday, November twelfth." Ruth's voice broke laughingly. "Doesn't that strike a chord in your memory?"

Mary's brow knitted. "No, I give the riddle up. Tell me. One of your escapades,

I suppose. You delight in doing things a little off the usual line."

"On the contrary, this is pure convention. It's a love story on the old lines. Call it 'The Princess and Her Two Lovers.'"

Mary held up a silencing hand. "Of course, I remember—Dick Rowton and Roy Anderson."

Ruth's gesture was dramatic. "To-day is the appointed time for their gifts."

Again Mary's laugh of recollection. "In some ways you're an utter child, Ruth. That notion of yours that the style of the gift would show the metal of the man! It will probably show no more than the state of his purse and his æsthetic leanings."

Ruth swung round in her chair. With swift transition she was grave. Consideration sat heavily on her forehead.

"You know those two, Dick and Roy? Are they likely to be conventional, either of them?" She shrugged and lay back in her chair.

"I should say not. They both have character and grit. The princess would make no mistake whichever she chose. Well, I looked in to discuss fripperies, but I retreat; you've weightier matters on hand." Mary moved with mock haste to the door, opened it, and stepped from the room.

Consideration still sat heavy on Ruth's face. From the seed of a jest might come big issues. Those two men, Dick Rowton and Roy Anderson—she visualised each. Rowton, tall and lean, features finely chiselled, unflinching eyes. Anderson, shorter, not so lean, with nothing of the ascetic in the moulding of his features, honest eyes with the look of a faithful dog in them. And both men had given her love. Her inclination had swayed hither and thither like the fluttering of a wind-teased leaf. Then in whimsical mood she flung her gauntlet, a princess most regal in her bidding.

To Rowton she said: "For a year I claim freedom from decision. This is Tuesday, the twelfth of November. On this date next year come to see me, bringing a gift."

"A gift?" Rowton's eyes scanned hers curiously. He nodded presently in understanding. "I see what you want, Ruth—some convincing proof of my love." He saluted, shoulders squared, meeting the challenge of her eyes.

And later to Anderson she said: "Give me a year to solve the puzzle. On Tuesday, the twelfth of November next year——" Her voice tripped and stumbled over her fairy tale fancy.

Anderson listened in silence. She saw her challenge weighed, pondered—and accepted.

A clock chimed, and she sprang suddenly to her feet. In her bedroom she took down a dress of powder blue, filmy as a cobweb. She wound a narrow rope of pearls about her throat. Her hands moved impetuously, decking her loveliness. She was charm; she was vivacity; she was swayed by excitement.

Her hand on the handle of the sitting-room door, she had an instant of hesitation. Perturbation bayed momentarily at her heels. Conquering it, she opened the door and saw Rowton standing against the fireplace.

She had not formed a clear mental picture of the time and the hour. Vaguely she had seen it through a mist of badinage. Now she saw Rowton's face set into serious lines. He came towards her with a gesture that was relief in epitome.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "A year may seem a regular cycle of Cathay. But here's its completion."

"Sit down and talk to me," she commanded. "Tell me what the year has held. Travel? Adventure?" She glanced appreciatively at his splendid physique. "The usual tourist routes or the wilds?"

"Tourist routes hardly offered what I wanted. Yes, I left beaten tracks." He watched her for a moment in silence.

She saw that to jest was remote from his thoughts. In mirthful mood she had flung her gauntlet. This man had picked it up, carried it as a banner. She drew a sharp breath to hide a strange onslaught of shyness.

"Your finger on the electric button," Rowton was saying, "you let loose forces beyond your control, Ruth. Were Anderson and myself just toys to play with?" He

bent forward in his seat, holding an odd-shaped parcel in his hands. "This is my gift."

She took it from him and unwound the folds of paper. Something gleamed presently in her hands. Ivory. Exquisite to the touch, smooth as the cheek of a sleeping child; with a hint, too, of mystery, as of something veiled and remote. From the gleam of it in her hands she glanced to Rowton's face.

"In some subtle fashion ivory suits you," he said. "An ivory crown for the princess." He flung this lighter mood aside and his voice became deep, vibrant. "Do you want to hear the history of the year's absence?"

She nodded, still fingering the smooth ivory, realising its beauty.

"You won't want to hear a story of big game hunting," Rowton said. "Perseverance, a cool head, a tang of grit for salt—there you have all such stories." His eyes dwelt on the ivory for a moment. "I had a good bag of the stuff—enough to make myself worth robbing. A drugged cup of coffee, a servant in league with the robbers—easy enough now to see how it was done. That piece of ivory in your hand is all that was left. It lay in the pocket of my coat, unobserved." With a shrug Rowton leant back in his chair. "Now I come to the part of the story that should be told well, but words never come to my heel at bidding."

"I can make pictures," Ruth said quickly. "If you give me bricks, I can build."

"That's good of you. Well, then, listen."

He gave her facts in crisp sentences. She saw presently the picture she must make rising vividly against a background of the man's personality. The awakening in the stark loneliness of primeval forest. Endless vistas, holding nothing human save himself. For sound the menace of unseen movement, creatures of the forest near, but invisible. A solitary man sentinelled about with mystery. Sweltering sun, pitilessly beating upon the path he followed, inch by inch now, for he was hurt. Pain limping at his heels, forcing tardy movement. Nights when the heavens were strewn with the watchful eyes of stars. Morning again and that endless progress.

"Sometimes I thought what *rest* death would be," Rowton said. "To lie down and shut one's eyes to the sun." He shrugged and smiled into her eyes. "But I had to run a race against Time. The day and the hour." He pointed to the gleam of white

on her knee. "An ivory crown for the princess."

Ruth was suddenly aghast. So much for a whim of hers! Gold for thistledown! She glanced almost furtively at Rowton's face. Strength, daring, and surely with a touch of poetry in the eyes? He had brought her ivory. Her fingers caressed it—beauty plucked from the heart of endeavour.

"I thank you," she said softly.

"In the only way that will make life worth while?" he asked vehemently. "You know that you can make it either light or——" He broke off, leaving the sentence like a

from the room. The ring of his footsteps grew fainter and fell into silence.

At first she welcomed silence. In it she visualised Rowton's story again—courage, an invincible determination to succeed, physical suffering negligible so he could show himself the perfect knight. She had again that sense of loosed forces. Say she had looked for the musical progress of a stream and found a tumultuous sea!

She looked questioningly at the watch on her wrist. What of Anderson? Her thoughts took a quick turn, seeing him in the light of her interview with Rowton. No perilous



"You speak in riddles. I give the answer up."

snapped thread. "I had forgotten Anderson and his gift. I'll play the old fairy tale game to the end, since it's your whim. But when you've had his gift and judged between us——" Again that quick snap of the thread of his sentence.

She touched the smooth ivory. "This is the gift of a very gallant lover," she said.

"And for the rest I must wait, I suppose." He eyed the clock and rose to his feet. "The time and the hour for the other man. What it is to love a whimsical woman!" He bent over her hand turned, and went

journeys for Anderson. The usual routine of business and pleasure. Through the year she had met him frequently, and always that dumb look in his eyes as of a faithful dog.

It was incredible that he should tarry, yet her watch showed the minutes fleet-footed. A quarter of an hour, half an hour——

And then abruptly the telephone bell rang close at her ear. She lifted the receiver from her writing desk. Anderson's voice,

"Are you there, Ruth? Did you think I could forget? The time and the hour, but I have no gift. Circumstances have been one too many for me. You wouldn't understand. What's that you say, Ruth? I'm

and the other man came into the room. Not a tall man; features not incisively chiselled; little of grace in his movements. She broke off her mood of comparison and pointed to a chair.

"I suppose Rowton has been?" Anderson asked.

She assented. Her eyes went instinctively to the gleam of ivory. Anderson's eyes followed hers.

"His gift?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"Ah, I can guess its history. A knightly gift." He held his hands out, palms downward, showing their emptiness. "That's how I come to you."

She bent forward. "Why?" she asked. "*Why?*"

He lifted his head with a jerk, meeting her eyes. "Can't you guess?"

She shook her head. Almost she could have shrunk away from the look of intensity his eyes held. She had again that sense of having loosed forces beyond her control, as if the faint stirring of a summer breeze had broken suddenly into a cyclone.

"You don't understand that my gift is just that—empty hands?"

She gave a movement of irritation. "You speak in riddles. I give the answer up."

Anderson rose from his chair and took a quick turn about the room. He came to a pause against the open fire, staring down into its red heart.

"You know how the money I inherited was made?" he asked her abruptly.

"Business—stocks and shares. I don't understand such things."

"Then listen, Ruth." He stooped forward, beating one hand against the other. "I inherited a pot of money from my father. It was the final fruit of a gigantic trust. There were details that went to the making of the money that turn me sick when I think of them—a car of juggernaut." His gesture was one of quick repulsion.

Ruth's thoughts went hither and thither gleaning in the fields of memory. A shrug of the shoulder, a caustic sentence. "Old man Anderson's trust was a regular slaughter of the innocents. . . . Made his pile quickly, though. All in the game. . . . Can't do business in kid gloves. . . ." And here



"You know how the money I inherited was made?"

to come round and see you? But I'm trying to explain that I'm empty-handed. You still want to see me? I'll come at once, then."

She waited with her forehead puckered in a frown. Rowton's achievement and Anderson's "I'm empty-handed, Ruth." She toyed with the ivory. It spoke of the fierce glare of the sun, padded feet of leopard, tropical foliage, long vistas of solitude, and a very valorous man. How knightly his figure had appeared just now, the head set on the shoulders like that of a Grecian athlete!

She lifted her eyes as the door opened

and there a laugh for the old man's business acumen.

Anderson was watching her. She lowered her own eyes quickly. That look of his, faithful, dog-like, set something stirring uneasily in her breast.

"You asked for a gift, Ruth—the whimsical idea of a fairy princess. But Rowton and I were not in whimsical mood. You stirred the deeps in each of us. Rowton risked his life to bring you that ivory. I've been down into the depths and come back with empty hands."

His meaning was becoming clear to her. She caught her breath at the sheer incredibility of it.

"You mean you'll give that money up? All of it?"

"Every dirty brass farthing of it."

"Why?" With an effort she steadied her voice. "*Why?*"

"Because I love you. And because I love you I realise that I can only come to you with clean hands." He smiled into her perturbed eyes. "Don't worry, Ruth. I'm not entirely a fool. I realise that this is the sort of action that will send me away from you—out into the wilderness. I'm flinging away any chance I ever had of winning you. But you asked a gift, and I had to offer you the best within my power."

"Hush!" she said. "For a few minutes I want to be still." She closed her eyes. Her ears held an echo of her words to Rowton: "I can make pictures. If you give me bricks, I can build." And now rapidly she was picture-making. She had flung a gossamer web, and Anderson had made it a rope of steel. His gift to her was born of the very soul of him.

The firelight touched the ivory again so that it gleamed. It held her gaze for a moment. A knightly gift, Anderson had called it. Rowton had faced high adventure, fearless; from the jaws of death he had plucked ivory for the princess. And Anderson sat there with empty hands. She found herself staring at his hands. The light of the fire, flickering, dancing, seemed to lace the air with jewels—ruby, amethyst, diamond, a cascade of brilliance. Momentarily she was dazzled and held at gaze, as if Anderson suddenly held his hands palm downwards and scattered these flame-kissed gems. They lay about her feet, a regal gift.

She moved abruptly in her chair, and Anderson's head jerked up.

"Finished? Got the whole thing clear in your head, Ruth?"

"I'm still dazzled," she smiled.

"Dazzled?" He looked at the ivory and nodded. "I understand. Rowton's is a knightly gift."

He got to his feet then and would have moved to the door but for her hurried question.

"What are you going to do, Roy?"

"Do? The usual thing. Earn my bread and butter."

"Where?" she asked.

"Away North. Sheep farming. An open-air life has compensations."

Pictures thronged to her—Anderson, the possessor of Fortunatus's purse, Anderson earning his living by hard toil. Ease—and strenuous days. Smouldering fire—and a leaping flame.

He took her hand and held it for a moment.

"Good-bye, Ruth. Don't worry about me. Life's always going to be a better thing because I loved you. Good-bye. Good luck to you and Rowton."

Odd how the firelight still laced the shadows with its mimicry of jewels—opal, topaz, pearl, gifts most royal! And the giver had spoken of empty hands.

The sound of his retreating footfalls came up from the hall below. Ruth hurried to the door, opened it, and reached the head of the stairway.

"Roy!" she called.

He looked up, surprised at the note in her voice.

"Will you come back for a moment?"

Anderson had mounted the stairs in an instant. He stood at her side, looking at her with the faithful eyes of a dog.

"When are you going?"

"Up North? Next week probably. The sooner the better."

"Yes," she nodded. "We need not dally. Surely by next week we can be ready."

He stooped, peering into her face.

"Ruth—what's that you're saying? We?"

"The princess and the man she chooses. Oh, but you're so slow to understand," she chided. "Your gift is beyond words exquisite. You've stirred the deeps in the soul of the princess."

He would have caught her hands in his, but with a swift movement she stooped and touched his fingers with her lips.

"Dear hands!" she said. "You called them empty, and all the time they were filled with jewels."

# BUFFALO'S DAUGHTER

By ARTHUR MILLS

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

THIS is the story of Molly Budge, daughter of Major-General Budge, K.C.B., etc., etc.—“Old Buffalo,” as his division used to call him.

Much distinction had come the General's way. He had led the column that cut the Hedjaz railway. That was the time he issued his famous order to the Colonial Camel Corps, who, having to cover twenty miles in six hours, had complained they were bogged in heavy rain, and could go no further: “Units will proceed according to schedule.” Anyone who has seen a camel in mud will understand. After which the camels somehow managed to slither their way up the mountains of Moab, and “Buffalo” Budge took Anman. In the years of his retirement these achievements were forgotten, and Buffalo's chief claim to fame in Folkestone was that he was Molly's father. He was well content to leave it at that, playing his golf and bridge and reading his daily paper.

Molly was twenty-one, well-built, healthy, athletic. She had her father's frank grey eyes and a dimpled edition of his square, purposeful chin. For the rest, she had the tastes of any ordinary English girl, liking tennis, dancing, bathing, parties. Among the personnel of the garrisons of Shorncliffe and Dover she had many admirers, none of whom she declared she would ever marry because she would not like to leave her dad.

Bob came along that summer—from Chile of all places, wherever that might be. Molly looked it up on the map and, after a search, found a long straggly strip of country all down one side of South America.

The General had met Bob up at the golf club and brought him back to tea. “Nice young fellow,” he said, after Bob had gone. “By Jove, that is a pretty lonely life he leads! Bet he finds it good to get back for a bit.” The General was thinking of his own early days on the North-West Frontier.

Bob was quite different from the other young men in Folkestone. He had the

quaint, restrained manners of a man who has lived a great deal by himself. He did not know how to dance and he could not play tennis.

“Don't get much practice in the Andes,” he apologised.

“Where are the Andes?” Molly asked.

“They are mountains in South America. I've got a railway line right over the top of them.”

The idea of having a railway line right over the top of a range of mountains appealed to Molly tremendously. As he got to know her better, Bob talked more about his work. He lived in a little house half-way up the mountains. His job was to keep the railway signals in good order. His descriptions made that little house live for Molly. She hated the idea of his going back to it; it must be so frightfully lonely. He was only two or three years older than herself and so nice-looking. What a difference between him and the other young men in Folkestone!

The inevitable happened a fortnight before Bob had to go back.

The General gave trouble. He did not like the idea of his daughter going to Chile. He cross-examined Bob. Was the climate fit for a white woman? Was it fair to take a girl out to a place where she would not have a soul to speak to from morning till night? Did his salary justify his taking a wife?

Bob held his ground. The climate was perfect; Molly would only be up in the Andes in the summer. In the winter she would go down to Valparaiso, where she would find plenty of English people, and get tennis and amusements just as if she was at home. As for his prospects—well, the job he had was a pretty responsible one, and, as far as he knew, the Company thought well of him.

“Well,” said the General, after a long, agonising pause, “if my daughter wants to join you after six months, I shan't stop her.”

Six months later the General, at Liverpool Docks, watched a receding steamer. The steamer carried Molly. The General cleared his throat, twisted his moustache, and turned his straight old back on the sea.

## II.

No young couple that ever went to sun-warmed Egypt or the flower-decked shores of the Mediterranean could have passed their honeymoon days more ecstatically.

Bob's house lay four thousand feet above sea-level in a beautiful valley through which ran the snow-swollen waters of the Rio Branco. Every day the blue sky of Chile—which forms part of the theme of the Chilean national anthem—lay above like a gorgeous sheet stretched over the jagged edges of the mountains. In the garden grapes, nectarines, and peaches ripened. In a cottage at the back lived Pietro, the Chilean telegraph clerk, and Maria, his wife, who acted as a sort of servant, and could only cook *cueca*, a thick chicken broth that is the national dish of the country folk. Two mountain-bred ponies, which Bob rode when he went up to inspect his telegraph line, were the only other living things.

For the first fortnight Molly was too busy with the house to have time to think of anything. Her first misgivings came to her one evening as she stood on the porch waiting for Bob to come back. He was a little later than usual; the sun had gone down, and the mountains rose huge, black, and menacing on either side.

There was something terrifying in their grandeur that night. Molly felt if it had not been for the railway line the tremendous solitude would have got on her nerves. That railway line comforted her; it ran its precipitous way on the other side of the river opposite their house. The fact that it climbed another six thousand feet, and was one of the most remarkable pieces of engineering in the world, left her cold. What she liked was to feel that, isolated though they were in the heart of the Andes, they had a railway running right past their house.

Bob came home the other way, coming up round the back of the house. Molly was still standing looking at the railway. She did not see him; there was a tiny tremble on her lips. He took her in his arms and was shocked to find her chilled to the bone.

That evening compunction seized him. He ought never to have brought a girl like Molly out to a life like this. He would

apply for a transfer to a town post. When they had eaten their dinner, he did all he could to keep her distracted, taking her into the signal-room and showing her how the various appliances worked. He went to great pains to explain the latest device that had been installed for detecting defects in the cable line.

"You light the lamp and connect up the galvanometer." He made a bit of wire fast with a pair of pliers. "See?"

"Yes," said Molly, who did not "see" in the least. She only saw a lot of little wooden boxes, some brightly polished brass instruments, and a tangled mass of wires, which she would not have touched to save her life, for fear of getting an electric shock.

"Then you look at that slide"—Bob pointed to a strip of ruled metal—"and if the spot-light is at zero, everything is O.K. If it is there"—he tapped the slide to the left of the zero mark—"that means there are 9.9 megohms of resistance offered, and nothing much the matter. But if it is there"—he tapped further to the left—"then there are one hundred and eighty megohms of resistance, and the line is seriously impaired; and if it does that"—he gave the handle a tweak, and the spot-light shot off the screen—"the line is 'dis' altogether."

"What does 'dis' mean?" asked Molly.

"Disconnected—gone phut."

Molly nodded, bewildered. "What do you do then?" she asked.

"Send out to repair it."

"But you've got miles of line: how do you know where the break is?"

"My darling, that is just what I've been trying to explain to you."

Bob tapped his testing plant. "The marks on that slide correspond on this map. I've only got to see where the spot-light is to know just where the line is out of order."

"Oh, how clever!" Molly nodded again. The fact that when the spot-light went off the slide the cable line would not work, had sunk into her curly little head, but the rest remained sheer gibberish.

She was more interested watching her young husband's smooth, fair hair and boy's face as he busied himself with his instruments, comfortable in the thought that as long as he was with her there was no loneliness in the Andes.

## III.

ONE day Bob got a message to go to Santiago. "It is a business trip, and I'll not

be able to take you along," he explained to Molly. "Would you like to stop here or run down to Valparaiso?"

"How long will you be away?" asked Molly.

"Two days. I'll go down on a goods train this afternoon; fix up for you to run down to Valpo, if you like."

Molly was faced with a problem. One half of her cried aloud to go down to Valparaiso, anywhere rather than be left alone in the heart of these great, terrifying mountains. The other half said: "If Bob thought it was not wise for you to stay here alone, he'd insist on your going to Valparaiso; he would not ask what you wanted to do. Going away means expense. You'll have to get used to being left alone at times sooner or later. Why not begin now?"

"I'll be all right here," she answered.

"Will you?" He looked at her.

"Of course. What do you think will happen to me? Run over by one of the bi-weekly trains?" Her grey eyes met his, smiling.

He laughed. "You look ridiculously like your father sometimes, darling," he said, kissing her.

Next morning Bob boarded the goods train. After she had seen him off, Molly returned to the house. From the porch she could watch the train crawling downward till it looked no bigger than a small black snake creeping along the side of the great precipice at the end of the valley. Then she turned back to the house.

She had two days to fill in. Sitting on the porch that first evening, watching the last rays of sunlight flushing the peaks, Molly wondered if any sight would bring human eyes greater joy than she would feel when she first caught sight of Bob's train on Wednesday afternoon.

Trouble began the next day. Maria, after bringing her breakfast, began to chatter volubly. Molly, who could not speak Spanish, only caught the word "Pieto" repeated many times. Something about her husband was evidently upsetting the Chilean telegraph clerk's wife.

Molly decided the best thing to do was to find Pieto. She got up and went outside. Maria ran in front of her, stopped, and pointed one arm at the paddock, where Bob's ponies were kept. The grey pony was there, but the roan was missing.

The telephone bell now rang furiously. Molly lifted the receiver.

"Who's that?" asked a voice sharply.

"Mrs. Holden," Molly replied.

"Oh!" The voice changed. "Your husband has gone down to Santiago, hasn't he? Can I speak to his clerk? I'm Bates, the traffic manager."

Molly stared helplessly at Maria. "I don't know where the clerk is," she answered. "Something has happened to him, I think. His wife is here trying to explain, but I can't talk Spanish. Would you like to speak to her?"

"Please."

Maria picked up the receiver with a shaky hand. A dialogue followed, which Molly gathered to be sharp questions from the other end of the line and whining evasions from Maria. The dialogue ended, Maria signalled Mr. Bates wanted to speak to Molly again.

"That wretched telegraph clerk has taken one of the ponies and gone off to visit some friends," he said. "Can't trust these fellows a moment once their master's back is turned. Doesn't matter. We shan't be using the line till the International comes through to-morrow. Good-bye, Mrs. Holden. Hope you'll be quite comfortable. Ring me up if I can do anything."

That telephone talk comforted Molly enormously. She hung up the receiver. Pieto would get it for this when Bob came back. She wished she could speak enough Spanish to ask Maria what time she expected him. Before dark, she hoped. She did not quite like the thought of being just two women alone up in those mountains, miles from anybody. Not that there were really any brigands or bandits. Bob had said that was all nonsense—they had been stamped out by the frontier police years ago.

There was still no sign of Pieto when bedtime came. Molly took a last look at the black, shadowy outline of the mountains, wished for the hundredth time she could speak Spanish, if only to say a few words of comfort to Maria, who had been in tears all day, and went to her room.

Standing at her window, she felt the great mountains towering on either side of the house enveloping her in a sort of grim hostility. If only a dog would bark to break this utter stillness! She would have liked to ring up Mr. Bates again, just to hear the sound of a human voice. Molly forced herself to undress, got into bed, and lay with her eyes wide open in the darkness. On one thing she was resolved: whatever Bob thought of her, she would never stay





"All she knew was that she was on the verge of losing consciousness. . . . Then a most strange thing happened."

by herself in that house again. Sleep came at last, heavy, apprehensive, unrefreshing.

The clatter of a tea-cup woke her. Maria stood by her bed. A glance at Maria's face made it clear Pietro had not returned. But for this Molly cared nothing. With her waking all weight of anxiety had gone.

Bob returned to-day. Sunlight poured into the room.

She looked at the clock Seven-thirty. Bob had already started. In seven hours now she would see his train; in seven hours and a half he would be home. After all the long, anxious hours joy came over-



"Out of the mist there loomed a figure. . . . She felt a sense of comfort in the outstretched hand."

"Yes?"

"We've got no communication with the Argentine side of the railway except through you. I wonder if you could telephone a message up to Biaca—the station the other side of the tunnel, you know?"

There was a controlled calm about Mr. Bates's voice which Molly felt was unnatural. Instinctively she braced herself.

"The position is this," continued the traffic manager. "There has been a landslide up at the Cumbre—part of the line has gone. Two men were working up there at the time. One, I'm afraid, is killed; the other came down here on a trolley and reported it. The International is due over at four o'clock. If you would 'phone through to Biaca, and say the train is not to proceed beyond that point, I'd be awfully obliged to you."

"All right," said Molly.

"I'll hold on to this line. When you've

whelmingly. What a little fool she had been to fidget so! Bob must never know. Why, it was nothing to stay a couple of days alone!

B-r-r! B-r-r-r! B-r-r-r-r!  
The telephone made her jump. Molly laughed as she picked up the receiver. It would be Mr. Bates probably ringing up about Pietro.

"Hullo! Hullo!"  
"Mrs. Holden speaking. Is that Mr. Bates?"

"Yes. Sorry to trouble you. I want to speak to the telegraph clerk."

"He is not back yet."

"The devil he isn't!"

A long pause.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Blast the fellow!" Molly heard Mr. Bates say, then to her: "Mrs. Holden!"

got through, you might let me know. Make it quite clear the International is not to go past Biaca on any account."

Molly went to the other telephone, rang, and lifted the receiver. No answer. She rang again. Still no reply. Rang a third time. Utter silence.

"Can't get an answer," she reported to Mr. Bates.

"Perhaps the fellow is out of the room. Try again in a minute or two."

Molly tried at intervals for half an hour. Each time she reported failure to Mr. Bates, she felt that the control of his voice was being maintained at increasing cost.

"The line has been working all right, hasn't it?" he asked anxiously the last time.

"Y-yes," answered Molly. "Tell you what, I believe I know how to test it. Wait a minute."

She went across to where the apparatus was kept, lit the lamp she had seen Bob light, and regarded the little disc of light encircling the zero. Very gingerly she turned down the switch she had seen Bob turn down.

"Oh!" Molly jumped. The spot-light went off the slide like a flash of lightning.

She went back to the telephone. "It's dis," she said.

"What!" said Mr. Bates, unmistakably shouting.

"Dis—not working." Molly described the behaviour of the spot-light.

Mr. Bates listened in a silence which Molly felt to be absolutely glacial. "And that man Pioto hasn't come back?" he asked at last.

"No. My husband will be back at seven o'clock, though."

"Seven o'clock! By seven o'clock to-night, Mrs. Holden, the International will be lying at the bottom of a two-thousand-feet ravine; it will come rumbling through the tunnel, round the bend, and go crash over the place where the line has fallen away."

"But won't the driver see there has been an accident to the line?"

"No; it is round a bend. He'll be just getting on to the down slope after the tunnel; no power on earth will enable him to pull that train up in the distance. If the International leaves Biaca this afternoon, two hundred people will go to Kingdom Come. I have told Holden dozens of times that line of his isn't in a safe place," Mr. Bates added. "Beg your

pardon, Mrs. Holden—it is nothing to do with you, of course."

Molly was doing some hard thinking. "Mr. Bates," she asked, "how far is it to Biaca?"

"Ten hours from here. If I sent a man off now and he galloped the whole way up the Andes, he could not get there in time."

"Yes, but from here?"

"From Rio Branco? Well, say, six hours. I could get a man to Biaca from Rio Branco in time, but what's the good of that? Your husband is away, Pioto is away—there's no one there."

"There is me."

"You!"

"Yes, and Bob's horse."

"My dear Mrs. Holden, no woman living could ride over the Andes alone."

"Well, it's no good my sitting here doing nothing; I may as well have a try."

"You don't know what you are talking about; it is out of the . . . Hullo! . . . Mrs. Holden! Mrs. Holden! Oh, my God!"

To the accompaniment of the frantic ringing of the telephone bell, Molly quietly put on her boots. It was eight a.m. Six hours, he said. The International left Biaca at three o'clock.

Maria, tearful, imagining all sorts of things had happened to Pioto, wholly ignorant of the real motive of her mistress's mission, helped her saddle the grey pony. Molly took Bob's *rebenque* (rawhide riding whip) from the wall, pulled his *poncho* (native cloak) over her head, and climbed on to the pony's back.

With her English boots and breeches peeping beneath the flowing Spanish cloak, sweeping black felt hat pulled down over her eyes, she presented a curious, picturesque effect. But Molly had no thoughts for what she looked like; she was only conscious of being a tiny fragment of humanity confronting a stupendous task.

She, who from the comfortable security of the verandah of their house had grown to fear those great mountains as she had feared nothing in her life before, must now ride alone into the very heart of them. Grand, serene, implacable, they towered above—snow-capped Aconcagua, twenty-three thousand feet, the jagged outline of Tupangata, twenty-one thousand feet. An odd thought seized her. Had her terror of their mighty peaks been born of premonition? Were the mountains waiting for her? Was it her destiny that they should claim her to-day?

She knew the first part of the way ; it was the track Bob often came back by in the evenings. Rio Branco was the last point to which wheeled traffic could go. Beyond lay only the roughest possible mule track, dotted at intervals with tumbled stone shelters, relics of the days of the pony post.

For the first two hours the going was easy. The grey pony ambled along in such a sure-footed, confident manner that Molly began to wonder if Mr. Bates had not been making a fuss about nothing. Then suddenly they came to the end of the valley, and it seemed to Molly that the mountain-side rose absolutely sheer in front of her. She stared. Surely the way could not be straight ahead. But it was ; there was the railway five hundred feet above. The pony seemed to know, too. He turned of his own accord and began to plug his way straight upwards. Molly had to hang on to a tuft of his mane to keep herself from slipping over his tail. He was a splendid little pony, sure-footed, strong, and game. It was not until they had climbed two thousand feet that Molly looked down and saw the tremendous place they had come up.

The track now ran a little way below the line. To Molly that railway line was like a life-belt ; the twin steel rails seemed almost human in the sense of comfort they gave. Then all at once she came on a sight that made her pull the pony sharply up. Right in front stretched a great glissade of red, fresh-turned earth. A hundred yards of railway line had been torn up by the roots ; bits of rail and sleepers protruded from the rocks. She had reached the point where the landslide had happened. On her left the mountain dropped almost sheer to the valley, two thousand feet below. Looking downward, she saw the Rio Branco looking no bigger than a thread of silver silk. She shuddered. Somewhere between the track and the valley below lay the mangled body of the Chilean workman whose pal had escaped on a trolley to warn the traffic manager of the accident. She could see now the danger Mr. Bates had foreseen. The landslide was just round a bend. The International would come grunting round that bend and run straight off into space. Molly visualised carriage after carriage filled with helpless human souls crashing over and over in a headlong fall ; she felt physically sick.

The grey pony picked his way over the *débris* and they got once more back on to

firm ground. In front of her she saw the mouth of the tunnel.

It was from this point she knew that the worst part of the journey began. She was now ten thousand feet above sea-level, but the Cumbre, the old-time mountain pass between Chile and Argentina, lay three thousand feet above.

For a moment she was tempted to stay where she was and try and stop the train as it came out of the tunnel. Suppose she could not stop it ; there was such a little way between the tunnel's mouth and the bend. Mr. Bates had said, too, that it was absolutely essential the driver was warned before he left Biaca. Mr. Bates would know. No, she must finish the job, ride right over the Cumbre and down the other side. If only she knew the way ! It was probably safe enough to go over the Cumbre if one knew the road. But she did not. She could only trust in Providence and the pony.

She forced herself to gather the reins in her hand and start the climb. Once she thought : " No one but myself will ever know what it cost me to leave that railway line behind." She dare not look down. Higher and higher they climbed, each step, it seemed to her, bringing her nearer some implacable destiny.

They had been climbing some sixty minutes when suddenly the pony stopped. Looking ahead, Molly saw the rude track they had been following ceased its upward climb and ran horizontally right across a gigantic slope. The slope was very steep indeed, so steep that if either man or horse lost his footing, nothing could save them from rolling over and over to crash upon the rocks five hundred feet below.

Intuitively Molly knew that the grey pony, game little fellow though he was, funking making his way along that narrow ledge. Up to now she had left everything to the pony, letting him make his own way in his own time.

For an instant she hesitated, then her jaw jutting a little forward, just as old Buffalo's had done when the report came back that the camels could not get up the mountains of Moab, she lifted her *rebenque*.

" Get on, will you ? " She brought the whip down with a whack on the grey pony's quarters.

It was neck or nothing now, no going back, nowhere they could turn once they were out on that narrow ledge. Surely and firmly the little pony plodded along, one

leg often dangling over space. The least stumble, and they must go, the pair of them.

A sense of exhilaration seized Molly. She was level with the Cumbre now, level with those peaks that had towered menacingly over her house at Rio Branco. The railway line winding its way below seemed a trivial detail in the grandeur of the scene. She forgot she had ever feared the mountains; she felt a part of them; it seemed natural for her to be alone up there surrounded by the grandest panorama in the world.

Then the grey pony stopped again, and she came back to reality. Something had happened. The pony's ears lay back; his breathing came in gasps; she could feel his whole body trembling beneath her. Gingerly hanging round his neck, she lowered herself to the ground.

"What's the matter, old man?"

She rubbed his nose and felt something warm and sticky on her palm. A trickle of blood was coming from his nostrils. Heaven knew what the matter was, but she must not get on his back again, that was plain. Hitching the bridle over her arm, she began to walk. Sometimes her feet sank in loose earth; once on a projecting rock she gashed her ankle; an icy mountain wind swept the slope, biting her eyes and cheeks. She plodded on, the pony, relieved of her weight, following.

She became conscious of an uncomfortable feeling in her chest, as though an iron band lay round it. The band seemed to grow tighter with each step; breathing grew difficult; her legs felt like lead; something warm splashed on her hand. Good Heavens, her nose was bleeding now like the pony's!

At this second sight of blood a physical

nausea seized her, the outlines of the surrounding mountains dimmed; she seemed walking in a mist. She supposed she had mountain sickness, but did not know. All she knew was that she was on the verge of losing consciousness, and that if she did—but she dare not look down to the left.

Then a most strange thing happened. Out of the mist there loomed a figure, a bearded man in a long robe. He was holding out one arm, just as he did in a picture she had seen—she tried to remember where, but could not. She felt a sense of comfort in the outstretched hand. After that she remembered nothing more.

She came to slowly, uncertainly. The figure was still by her. She rubbed her eyes, rubbed them again. A square white stone was by her head. On it she read an inscription which she translated as best she could:—

"This statue was placed here on the boundary line between Chile and Argentina as perpetual pledge that these two nations shall henceforth live in peace."

All at once she realised. The statue must be the Christ of which she had heard Bob speak. *She was at the top of the Cumbre!* There, below, was a little white stone station.

The grey pony, recovered, stood placidly beside her. The descent to Biaca looked easy. She had a good hour to spare.

"Come on, old sport," she said, climbing on to the pony's back, "let's finish the job."

\* \* \* \* \*

Away back in Folkestone old "Buffalo" Budge sat before his fire. He missed Molly more than usual that evening.

"Wonder how that girl o' mine is getting on?" he thought.



# THE ROMANCE OF CASTLE ADAMANT

## THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF AN OYSTER

By L. R. BRIGHTWELL, F.Z.S.

*Illustrated by the Author*

THE medical profession tells us to eat oysters for a variety of reasons, all more or less substantiated. The ordinary healthy man, who eats what he likes because he likes to eat it, knows that of all *hors d'œuvres* invented by ingenious chefs, the one most calculated to act as the perfect prologue to a perfect gastronomic entertainment is the "succulent bivalve." For this reason and no other, the diner and his partner were seated one bland September evening in the Restaurant des Gastronomes somewhere "out West." They were discussing oysters—and a certain mutual acquaintance.

"My dear girl," said the diner, pursuing the absent and happily unconscious theme of their discussion, "my dear girl, I quite agree with you. He's a charming fellow, one of the best I ever met, but he'll never get anywhere. His life's been too devoid of adventure, as totally uninspired or stimulated by opposition or reverse, as completely lacking in all that makes for romance as—as"—here the diner gazed rather vaguely round the comfortable restaurant in search of inspiration—"as—as the existence of this very oyster I hold upon my fork."

So saying, the diner disposed, in the usual manner, of the hero of this little tale. The oyster, now departed, had lived for four years, to be eaten alive and have its career summarised as the absolute and complete opposite of Romance. This was its epitaph, this and the obvious satisfaction of the diner as our hero found his last resting-place. The diner was a good judge of oysters, but a bad hand at a simile. Let us see where he was wrong. Let us trace

the history of his last mouthful as it appeared four years ago.

At ten o'clock of a warm August evening, somewhere on the Devon coast, the hero of our story entered suddenly and violently into this troubled world of ours. He appeared, together with some fifty million little brothers and sisters, issuing from between a huge half-opened oyster shell. The family of fifty million appeared like a little cloud of smoke-strained froth in short "puffs." At one moment our hero was an infinitesimal speck merged in a cloud of other specks like himself; the next moment he became an entity, isolated, flung upward through the dull green water, making for the surface. The water was not deep—twelve feet at most—for it was low tide. Yet ere the baby oysters had travelled half the distance, they were scattered far and wide, until the speck whose fortunes we are following was alone as though the others had never been. A million hungry jaws were ready to receive those atoms as they hurtled upwards. Not only did fish take them by the hundred, but other creatures—dots of crablets, pin-point baby prawns, jelly-fish of a hundred shapes and all dimensions from a mere speck to a foot across—did the tiny oysters to death with claw and tooth and stinging cell. It was hail and farewell as regards our hero's relationship with his fellows. But though parted from his mates, he was not alone for long. As he neared the surface, the water became thick and populous with shapes wilder, more bizarre a hundred times, than himself, who resembled nothing so much as a butterfly propelled by a host of tiny

thread-like legs, or whips. The whole animal was a pigmy compared with a full-stop on this printed page. He was a grotesque, a thing to catch the eye, ere lost in a crowd of others wild as any vision of opium-smoker.

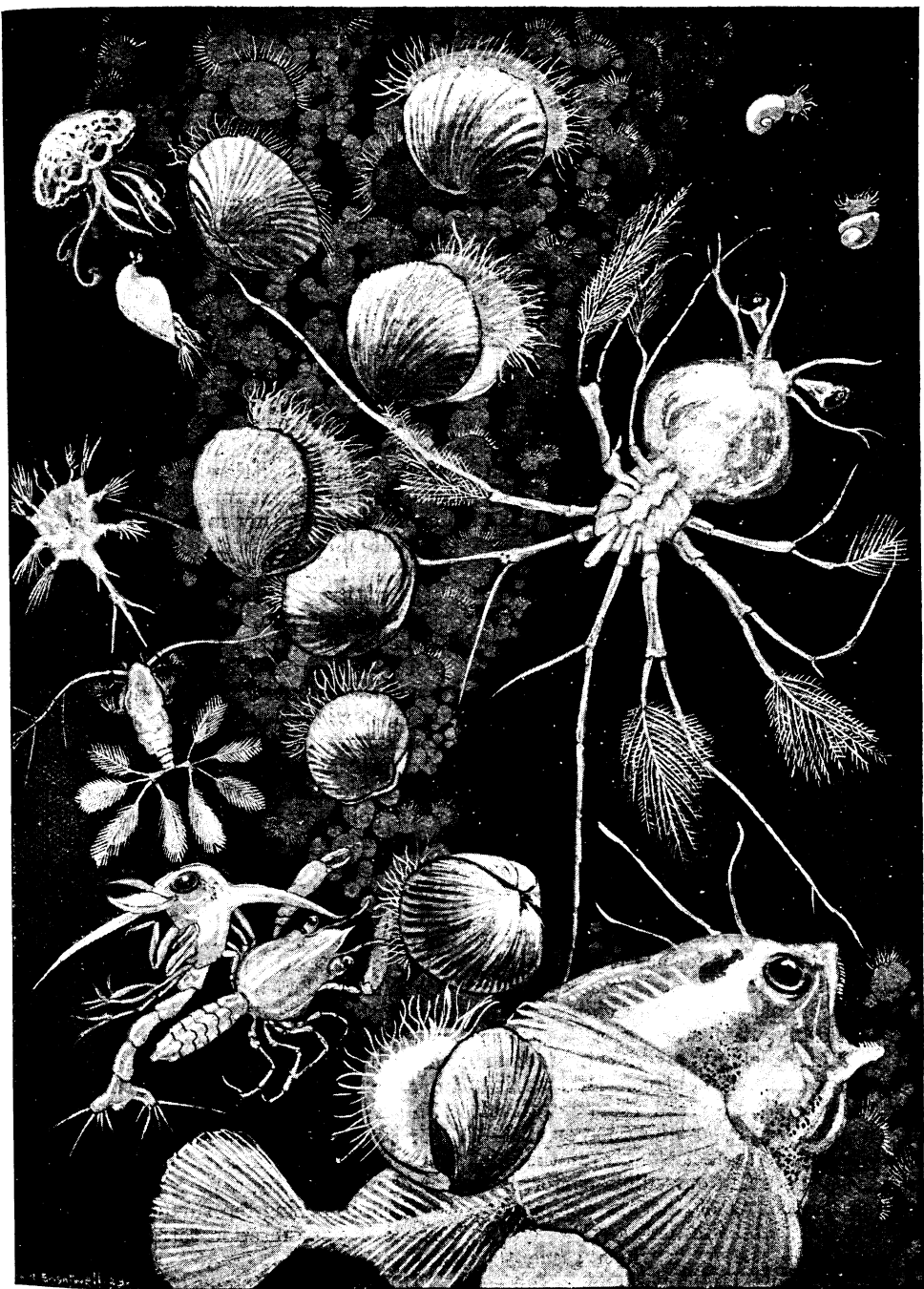
We may safely suppose that the reader knows how it feels to emerge from a cab, garbed as harlequin or cavalier, and make for the brightly-lit doorway leading to the fancy dress ball. It was thus with the tiny oyster. For a few moments he was conspicuous, could the naked eye have embraced his tiny shape, a thing wild and beautiful, whitely silhouetted against the darkness. And then, as he fast neared the surface, behold, he was merged in a crowd of other forms, whirling, twisting, reeling, gliding through the water—forms as wild and extravagant as ever emanated from the brain of goblin painter or writer of burlesque. For nine-tenths of the myriad forms of life which people the seven seas spend their early days upon or near the surface of the water. They make the water gritty to the feel, and on a dark night give it that appearance of "phosphorescence" which has delighted all of us. Fishermen call the water thus crammed with life "dirty," the naturalist calls it "plankton." You and I, when privileged to see the waves thus tipped with living fire, are humbly content merely to marvel at the sight.

The little oyster plunged into the frantic throng and became one with it. A "sample" of it dipped up in a glass jar and viewed by flashlight would have appeared like the Three Arts Ball and a mediæval goblin tapestry rolled into one. A single drop of the water beneath a high-power dissecting microscope would have looked like a collection of fabulous monsters roped into a circus ring. Here came a shape like to a shield fringed with ostrich feathers; ere long it would be a helpless barnacle anchored for life to a rock or harbour pile. Beside it was a thing, half devil, half scorpion; in a few years to come it would lie, stiff and scarlet, a "boiled lobster" in the public mart. There, worming its way in the mazy dance, was a creature all head and tail, yet miraculously propelled by a pair of huge gauzy butterfly wings, the whole small enough to go on a threepenny bit. Grown to maturity, it would lurk upon the sea-bed an angler fish, hideous to see, a monster six feet in length, with a mouth the size and shape of a coal-scuttle. Its end would probably come at the hands of a passing

trawler—it would be scraped from the seabed, hauled on board, packed in ice, then sent by train to London; a brief pause at Billingsgate, and finally it would be cut up and disposed of, at twopence a time, in the form of "fish an' chips" in the poorer quarters of a great city. In that crazy dance were scallops, prawns, crabs, crayfish, whelks, sea-slugs, starfish, jelly-fish, worms and less known creatures by the hundred million, many of them disguised in their nursery shapes beyond all recognition, even to the eye of science.

For twenty days did our little oyster make merry in this throng of dancers. He and his brethren each paddled his own canoe, the little shells floating hinge downwards, the protruding "velum," with its row of whips, thrashing the water, and rowing themselves hither and thither. The old oyster down below had broadcasted the seed, and at the end of twenty days it fell. That was a good year for oystermen—a warm, benevolent season, free from the gales which too often serve to make our English summer a dreary but time-honoured joke. There were now no cruel winds to scatter the baby oysters far and wide, some to the beds of rival oyster farmers, and the bulk into the Never Never Land. In the particular season in which our little oyster was fired into the world the great majority of his fellow-survivors—about a hundred thousandth part of the whole brood—fell, more or less, upon the ground prescribed for them. The old "brood" oysters had been judiciously placed on ground well prepared with brickbats, suitable for a well-conducted oyster to settle upon for life. So our tiny "veliger" oyster, who started life as an atomy one hundred and fiftieth of an inch across, now sank through the turbid water a magnificent oyster-to-be, nearly a tenth of an inch in length. He came to rest upon a fragment of shell—placed there by the "farmer" especially for his convenience—and upon it he fixed himself by means of his more curved shell. Less happy were many of his brethren. They had outlived that savage dance upon the surface of the sea, merely to fall at the end of their short lives on unpropitious ground. Some came to rest on sand, some on silt and sedge, clay, or the shifting ooze of the sea-ground chalk stones—all perished. Others, again, found still stranger anchorage. They fell on pots and pans and broken utensils of all kinds, where rust and other matters corrupted





The first appearance in public of the young oysters.

their young lives and brought them to a bad end. Others found harbour near the mouths of sewers and worse places, and perished miserably. A few came to rest inside empty ginger-beer bottles, tea-kettles and the like, and had their first growth choked in bottle-neck or spout, whilst

half a dozen eccentrics made their first and last home on the barnacle-encrusted shell of an ancient crab. This worthy, too old to see another moult, took its load of passengers upon a voyage of adventure that ended in the crab's eventually being run to ground by a naturalist and finding



a last resting-place upon the shelves of a museum. But our hero fell as wise men working in office and laboratory had planned that he should fall. He came to rest upon his tiny scrap of shell, and there installed himself, a little pearly boss, invisible to all save the trained naturalist and the expert oysterman. Had he settled upside down, i.e. with his flatter shell applied to a rock, he would have been a "rock oyster," and by the fishermen regarded as a distinct species. This strewing of the bottom with shell—"cultching," as it is called in the trade—ensured the safe navigation of the great turning-point in our oyster's career. The old shell had been sown upon the sea-floor to induce a fall of "spat," and the spat had fallen well.

### THE BUILDING OF THE CASTLE.

Once arrived at his scrap of shell, little Lord Oyster got to work. Loose, flat, and flabby, without distinct sight—with merely a dim cognisance of sunlight and shadow—utterly powerless to emit a sound, and deprived of limbs, he could hardly hope to live long in a world of "eat and be eaten" unless he made some effort to ensure his safety. He therefore lost no time—he commenced the building of Castle Adamant. His flabby body was enclosed in a filmy membrane called a mantle. This mantle was, in its way, as wonderful as any cloak of invisibility immortalised in our fairy tales. We may not tarry to observe it closely, but it abstracted the lime from out the sea-water and, having formed it into a paste, spread it in infinitesimal layers upon the outer margin of each of the two separate shells enclosing our oyster. In a short time this paste hardened into a veritable concrete. But more than this took place. The amazing fairy mantle gave to the rugged wall of concrete a layer of most lustrous enamel—mother-of-pearl, in fact. This mother-of-pearl is poor stuff in our edible oyster, but in some aristocrats of the sea achieves a fineness and exquisite delicacy which is responsible for the gems which grace the necks of so many fair ladies and enrich so many royal d'adems. But our hero was but a plebeian of his race, and lined his shell with a sort of pearly-bluish china. Though he would never grace a jeweller's window, yet could he make or break the fortunes of men.

A castle, to win our admiration and respect, must have the rime of age upon it, ivy and toad-flax upon its battlements, carp

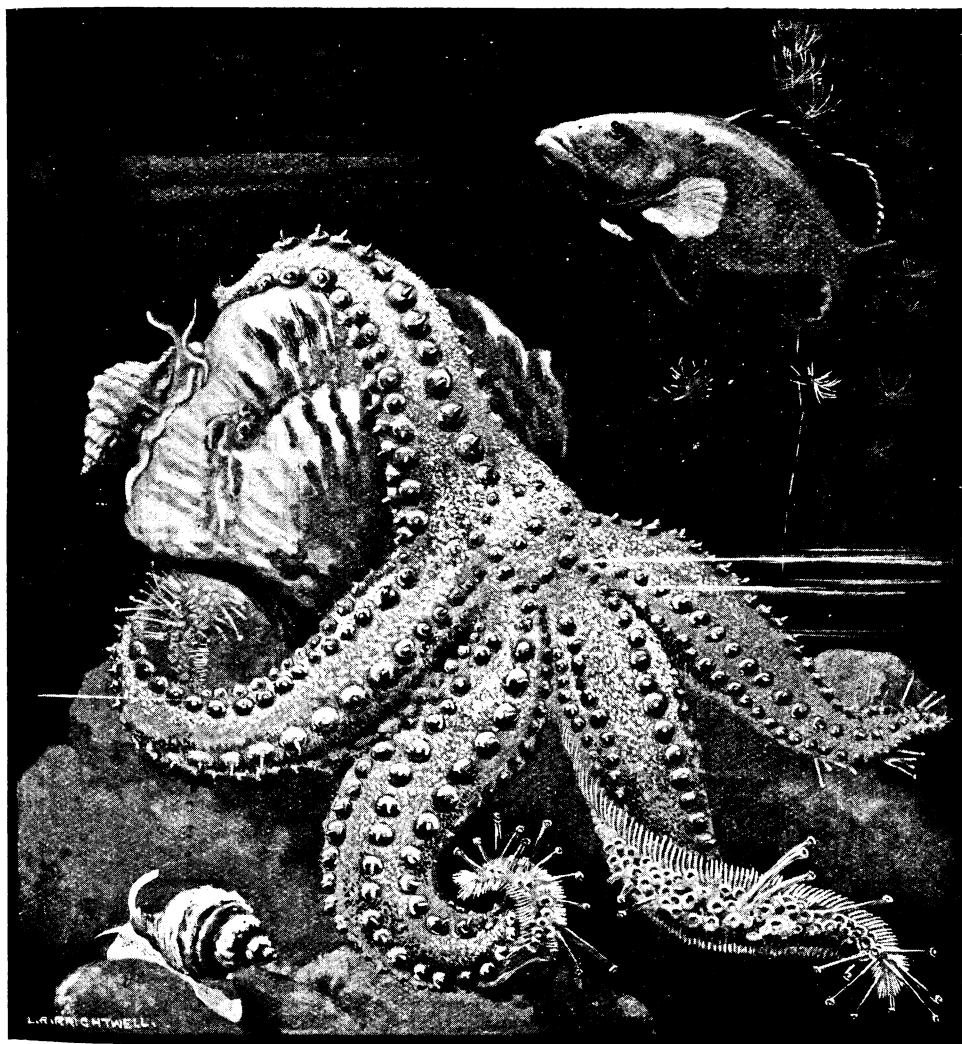
and lilies in the moat, and good company, ripe and mellow, in its apartments. Castle Adamant was no pretentious edifice erected by a parvenu. At a very early date it began to acquire a host of natural trappings on its walls without, and to entertain a swarm of retainers within. Each wandering sea-beast that had in view a safe anchorage for a sedentary future gave a passing glance to Castle Adamant, and many stayed. Fairy-like animals of many forms, destined to change strangely as they gained maturity, alighted on the rising battlements, said "Good enough," and settled there for life. The shrimp-like babies of the acorn barnacle came to rest upon the growing shell and, each raising his little conical house of stone, ranged themselves row upon row, like some camp array of tiny snow-white tents. The chance anemone bud, cast off from a far-distant parent, collided with the shell, righted itself by some lucky chance, and, taking firm hold, presently bloomed like some small cactus flower. Polyps of a dozen species shortly raised their fern-like colonies of horny stems and branches set with star-like buds. Sea-worms of many kinds upreared their tubes of stone and sand, and presently, jetting forth at each tubemouth a comb of deepest crimson, combined with polyp, weed, and sea-anemone to turn what might have otherwise been bare walls into a fairy flower garden. Later came other shapes to wander in and out amongst the plants and barnacles in search of housing sites. The slipper limpets piled their quaint shells one upon the other, the Chinaman's hat limpet heaped himself on top of them, and where a blank space offered, there the little pearly saddle oyster cemented himself down with a mother-of-pearl sheet-anchor strong as Castle Adamant itself. One might reasonably have thought the garrison would groan beneath the load of hangers-on, but there was within the castle machinery, to wit, a pair of huge muscles, capable of raising ten times the weight and of closing the interior to many a powerful foe.

It chanced that on a certain day when the castle gateway stood ajar, and the inmate sat drinking in the water that was his life, that there entered a miniature dragon, a tiny, filmy thing with two goggle eyes like motor lamps, three long horns, and a scorpion's tail. This monster cuddled down beneath the slimy "cloak" and—miracle on miracle—presently threw aside its horns and tail and settled down, a little

soft-shelled "pea-crab," to live her life out within the shelter of the castle, and perpetuate her early goblin shape in many a baby brood. Other pea-crabs, not a few, came to visit this little recluse in her retreat, and stayed a while. These were firm of shell and agile of limb, and therefore

"soft-shelled crab," she would have fetched a high price in the local mart, and later—at a labourer's weekly salary—been presented, on toast, to some exalted personage in Broadway's most exclusive restaurant.

Who would suspect, on seeing the placid wavelets lip and lap off shore beneath the



The starfish laying siege to Castle Adamant.

presently went their ways. But the crablet herself, constitutionally weak of limb, and clothed rather in parchment than in shell, stayed on until the day when Castle Adamant was stormed and taken. Soon afterwards the little pea-crab was flung into a dustbin by the chef. In America she might have claimed a more dignified end, for there, as

moonlight's tender glow, that there might lie the hopes of several hundred men? Dive beneath the waves—in imagination, of course—and view the tumbled shells, with crabs and weeds and little fish sprawling over them, and the suggestion might seem even more extravagant. Yet if ever the sea be visited by phantoms of the past, if

ever the waves reel back before the force of unseen keels and close in on the track of mystic ship and crew that vanish with the dawn, it should be upon the site of oyster beds. For the trade is old as much-sung piracy, and fully as romantic.

Look here, this moonlight night upon the sea, off shore, where comes a long procession of strange craft that knew and nursed the oyster centuries ere ever Billingsgate and the latest fashionable restaurant were known. First comes a savage craft, hewn from a whole log, hollowed out with fire, with flint axe and knives of bone. It is manned by two fierce and hairy men, clad in furs, and bending overside, straining their eyes to scan the sea-bed some three fathoms deep. They have gone a few steps further than their forebears, who merely sought the succulent oyster and his relatives the cockle, scallop, mussel, clam and razor-shell at low water. These men hold a long bamboo pole with a bag of plaited hide at one end, and with it they scrape the coveted oysters from amongst the sponge-draped stones.

A veil of thin but soaking sea-mist closes over the craft, veiling it and some centuries, perhaps, between it and the boat which follows after, as the mist rises. A well-formed, well-planned, well-manned vessel this, with huge lateen sails flapping in the soft night breeze. In the bow sits a stalwart man with dark curly hair, a face saturnine but fleshy, with piercing eyes, and huge brass earrings in his ears. This is Sergius Orato, who, a hundred years before the Christian era, showed himself a man of mark amongst his fellows by amassing a fortune through the simple medium of the humble oyster. He it was who conceived the possibility of growing oysters in the Lucrine Lake, near Baiae, and his oysters soon obtained a notoriety which they never lost, though they yielded first place at a later date to the efforts of his contemporaries in Britain. Sergius Orato it was who, involved in a law-suit over certain rights of land and water ownership, declared that sooner than be altogether cut off from his business through lack of room, he would grow his oysters in tanks upon the roof of his house. Such was the reputation he eventually gained, that oysters were brought from all parts of Europe to sojourn for a period in his famous lake and gain the "Lucrine" flavour.

The water boils and gurgles as the steersman of old Sergius's boat deftly puts the

tiller over to port, and hard in the pioneers' wake presses a host of craft captained by men who needed but to have the path pointed out to them to follow after with a mass of amendations and improvements necessary to their own especial seas and the tastes of their respective customers. Each successive boat shows more and more elaborate tackle, so that hide and sinew nets give place to rope ones, and the rope becomes obsolete as its place is taken by the iron-rimmed oyster dredger with its bag of chain mail. Here come the Frenchmen with enormous oyster parks at Corseilles, Granville, and other places upon the Norman coast, from Marseilles on the Mediterranean, and a hundred other spots, bringing in altogether some ten million of francs per year. Here come, too, the farmers of the famous green oyster from Marenne, adepts at "colouring" their oysters in specially prepared ponds, or "claires." In these favoured pools the oysters are coloured a wonderful bluish-green, due to a swarm of microscopic creatures which, taken in by the oyster as food, impart their colour to the mollusc's gills—a process that requires some years to reach the perfection esteemed in Parisian restaurants.

Now does the sea become populous with hundreds upon hundreds of strangely varied craft—oyster farmers from Portugal, with their vaunted "cooking" oysters, dredgers from Algiers, from Italy, and finally from Britain and America. These last, together with the Frenchman, have brought the getting of their harvests to an art. They have vast farms where the parent oysters are reared to raise and lay their spat—great areas enclosed with fences to prevent the spat escaping to the open sea. They have, moreover, favoured "parks"—endless perspectives of wood and zinc cages in which the spat are raised to maturity ere taken to the fattening grounds. And behind all these men, the dredgers and seamen, the merchants, planters and salesmen of a thousand grades, from the wealthy restaurateur to the humble coster—behind all these there works day in, day out, the marine biologist. In his quiet laboratory, undisturbed by the trickle of the water jets that aerate his experimental tanks, he investigates each phase of oysterdom, from the brood oyster and its spat to the finished product of the oyster farms, ere it is deemed fit to grace the dinner-table. The oyster's growth, the possible pollution of its surroundings, the life-histories of and means of combating

its countless enemies, all these and many other matters come beneath his microscope. We may think the oyster dear to-day at half-a-crown the dozen, as compared with the halycon days when they were sold at eightpence the bushel, yet never did harvest of the land give more trouble to its farmers than this off-shore harvest of the oyster parks. So passes the phantom oyster fleet, commencing with the cave-man and closing with the pursy Baltimore merchant and his three-thousand acres of Chesapeake oysters, and his annual turnover of some twenty-five million bushels—bread upon the waters, indeed.

We have dwelt for the space of several paragraphs upon the hopes and fears of the men concerned in oyster culture, that strange harvest of the sea on which so many interests are centred. Let us return to the *raison d'être*, the first cause of it all, as he lies "full fathom five" in Devon waters. So soon as he cast anchor on his piece of shell, he commenced to grow, soldering himself inextricably to his foundations, and at the same time ever increasing the battlements of his own two-shelled stronghold. On the third day of his installation he was a quarter of an inch wide. At the end of six months he was large enough to cover a shilling; the close of the first year saw him as large as the now all but obsolete five-shilling piece. From now onwards each scored ridge upon his shell would mark a year's growth, but it was touch and go from the commencement of each year whether or not he would see that year's completion.

#### THE STORMING OF CASTLE ADAMANT.

The spring of the next year following the oyster's birth saw a host of foes leagued together for the storming of Castle Adamant. A legion of widely diverse creatures were largely dependent for their well-being and maintenance upon oysters. Forward they came, and late February saw their vanguard striding the sea-floor on a thousand feet. First came the starfish—each one a five-rayed tank, or, rather, ironclad of the sort Mr. H. G. Wells has described—marching steadily forwards on innumerable feet—feet not worked by steam and steel, but made of flesh and sinew and propelled by water. Every starfish has thousands of these feet, each tipped with a sucking disc such as that which makes the octopus the horror that he is, or which holds the placid limpet to his rock. A huge old starfish, vivid red and

gold, came upon Castle Adamant ere it was fifteen months in building, wrapped himself about it, and commenced the siege. He tried for the first three hours to effect a direct entry, doing his best to insinuate his tips between its close-shut doors, and he failed. Then he tried different tactics. One would think a starfish had small house-room for a stomach. As a matter of fact, he is one vast stomach, which is kept in segments down his muscular arms and can be extruded—thrust out from the centre of his rays and expanded to an incredible extent. At the same time, so many scientists maintain, he exhales an acid fluid, fatal to all with whom it comes in contact. Thus the giant star wrapped himself round Castle Adamant and, extending his hideous maw, slowly began to engulf the entire edifice. Bit by bit those stone-built doors began to give, and then swiftly and surely, heralded by a boiling cloud of sand and ooze, the dredger came to the relief of Castle Adamant. An oyster bed is not left unpoliced for long. The oyster boats had been at work for some weeks, and now they were dredging the very ground on which our oyster friend was planted. The iron rim of the dredger scooped up shell and starfish together, and both were hauled on board and dumped on deck with a hundredweight of other oysters, starfish, stones, shells, crabs, seaweed—all the varied oddments of the "bed." Experienced hands soon cast the oyster overboard, and flung the starfish on a man-high heap of his fellows, to be later taken ashore and placed upon the land for fertiliser. Time was when the oyster fishers of old believed that by tearing the "crossfish" or "five fingers" in two and flinging the mutilated halves overboard, they had killed the foe that worked such havoc on their precious crops. But the starfish has but to lose a portion of himself to become, not less, but more than he ever was before. The torn carcass at once commences to repair the damage done, and the detached fragment becomes another individual. Thus the trouble is not removed, but increased. Quiet-spoken men in spectacles, hideously affected with *mal de mer* whenever they find themselves afloat, have gained for us this knowledge which has put many a pound in the pockets of the oyster merchants. The storm-tossed oyster dredger, facing all weathers, would waste half its labours were it not for the unseen work of the scientist, wrestling with Nature's riddles in the marine laboratory.

So passed the great assault of the wicked

starfish. But though he was repulsed, a hundred others rushed into the breach. They came on steadily, gliding up and down the rugged floor, even as the starfish had done, but more quickly. They were housed in shells, whelk shells, and had curiously pig-like heads, but with long horns like a cow, and a siphon-pipe waving aloft, through which they took the life-giving seawater to their gills. They were amazingly active and far more deadly than the starfish or "devil's hands" as the poetic East Coast oyster fishers like to call him. They came on by the hundred thousand, many kinds of them—"buckie," horse winkle, basket snail and whelk tingle. One and all they were intent upon the perpetuation of their species, and a full meal of oyster. They ensured the former by laying their eggs upon every convenient scrap of shell, rock, and miscellaneous *débris*. These eggs stood in rows looking like little vases and jars and classic urns, some quarter of an inch in height, and varying in shape according to their parentage. Then, their family responsibilities cast aside, the parents set to—with a keen edge on their appetites—upon the nearest oyster. One of them mounted the rough walls of Castle Adamant. There was none of the grotesque wrestling displayed by the starfish. The whelk sat down to "lick" the oyster out of house and home. It brought to bear upon the rugged shell a tongue some two inches in length, coiled like a watch-spring, and beset with a hundred rows of tiny teeth, set three abreast and turned on edge, forming a savagely fashioned saw guaranteed to bore a neat hole a tenth of an inch across through a quarter inch of ferro-concrete, given time enough. This living saw then was brought to bear on Castle Adamant, and the saw sustained heavy losses. Teeth were broken and blunted, but ever reinforcements came on from behind to take their place, and wreak the owner's wrath on Castle Adamant until such time as the broken teeth should be renewed. But here again the garrison of Castle Adamant was equal to the occasion. It not only kept the door tight-shut, but built up the walls from inside to counteract and replace every layer of lime and cement scraped away by the invader. A new layer of mother-of-pearl was built up on the inside. The whelk was determined to win through and suck the oyster out piecemeal, as other whelks were doing to other oysters all around. The oyster, blind, brainless, and limbless, yet sensitive to light, touch,

and sound, laboured unthinkingly and ceaselessly to counteract the growing pressure and increasing din that had come to assail his normal quiet. So raged this tiny war, the one pulling down, the other building up, until a passing cod settled the issue by engulfing the whelk and laying him to rest with two score other whelks, a pint of shrimps, three hermit crabs—in borrowed whelk shells—a two-pound knob of flint, forty sand eels, a paternoster, with twenty feet of line attached, two small lobsters, three dozen flatfish, and the heel of a fisherman's sea-boot!

The reader will appreciate, therefore, our assertion that the life of Castle Adamant was not without an element of drama. For besides starfish and whelk, a certain sponge and at least one species of marine worm were constantly at work pitting the castle walls with innumerable holes and forcing the owner perpetually to replace their ravages by unremitting labour from within. This was not all: the close of that same spring saw the South Coast invaded by the octopus. That eight-armed scourge of the lobster-pots and oyster-beds wrought sad havoc with the corpulent shellfish intended to enrich the menu of shore-dwelling *bons vivants*. The octopus is a die-hard, and will wrestle with an oyster for hours, off and on. He will wait until the shells are thrown ajar—what time the oyster takes in nourishment—and then, thrusting in an arm, will force the shells apart and tear the oyster out, a toothsome, unprotesting heap of flesh and fat. But "No surrender" had become a habit now with Castle Adamant. Even when evil-minded shore-crabs heaped silt and mud around the shell, fouling the surrounding water and making the oyster literally gasp for air, those invulnerable doors held firm. One night in June a tiny crab insinuated his pincered claw between the gaping shells, and they closed together with a snap, so that the crab retired, a claw the less until such time as he could renew it on the occasion of his next moult. The oyster, however, was powerless to reject the severed limb left within its walls, and therefore, irritated perhaps by its saw-edged presence, set to work and quietly covered it over with layer upon layer of that same lustrous porcelain which lined throughout the walls of Castle Adamant.

A bad time, you will say, for Castle Adamant. But it came to an end in late summer, when castle and garrison complete were hauled, with other oysters, on board



A host of foes leagued together: an attack by a wolf-fish.

an oyster dredger, incarcerated in an aerated tank for certain days, and then handed over to an oyster farmer, who dumped them on his beds hard by the Thames Estuary.

Here in waters well policed, the Castle Adamant waxed fat and thrived exceedingly. Three days a week the dredgers faced all weathers and purged the beds of whelk and

crab and cross-fish and encumbering weed and suffocating oyster-choking growths of close-packed mussels. For were they not husbanding those aristocrats of the oyster world, "natives"? When our hero was taken from the clear waters and rocky shores so favourable to oyster breeding, and carried to the Thames Estuary, from the moment

he touched its muddy bottom he became a "native." Oysters love muddy water, rich in minute forms of animal and vegetable life. They suck it in as a man may suck lemonade through a straw. In the chilly days and nights which made that June, July, and August an unusually trying summer, the castle still thrived apace, and added yet another ridge upon its rugged ramparts, the ridge that proclaimed it a "two-year-old," for an oyster is, roughly, as old as it is inches in diameter. The outer walls were rough indeed, heaped and hummocked with tube of worm and pyramidal shell of barnacle. They needed all the strength they could amass. For the cold weather that extended from the river mouth, right along the East Coast, and still further north, even to Cape Wrath upon the Highland coast, brought to our normally mild waters a monster terrible to all the tribe of shellfish. This was the wolf blenny, a spotted ogre some five feet in length, with rat-trap jaws that made nothing of the hardest shells. It came lurching across the oyster beds, cracking cockles as though they had been nuts, and engulfing lobsters as easily as a man might munch a shrimp. All was grist that came to its unconquerable mill. Yet Castle Adamant continued to pass unscathed. It held its own for yet another season, and herein was it more fortunate than some of its fellows. For when, one summer afternoon, the iron-mouthed dredger swept the shell-strewn beds, many a shell was dumped on one side, never to return. The expert on board deemed that Castle Adamant might run another year, to grow and wax fat and qualify for epicures who are undaunted by the legend "four and six a dozen."

Others he put back for another reason. They were found, upon examination, to be filled with a white jelly-like substance, the early stages of a brood to be. Tumbled overboard, and once again at peace, the whitish jelly turned with the waning

summer and clouded to a pale sepia, shot with countless tiny blotches of a darker tint. Not so dark, perhaps, as the row of dots which mark the oyster's makeshift eyes, and cause him to close his shell so tightly when the shadow of a passing fish or vessel falls athwart it, but still clearly discernible to the experienced eye. The oysters had changed from the "white sick" to the "black sick" stage. In due season these oysters yielded up each its store, and blew the "spat" forth into the perilous outerworld, even as the owner of Castle Adamant had been blown one summer evening three seasons ago. And now for Castle Adamant was fast approaching the beginning of the end. Some oysters escape the dredger ere a natural decay sets in, but presently the castle was once again hauled up high and dry, and this time taken to the oyster station, "sized," and packed with thousands more—a forty-thieves-like regiment of barrels—and put aboard the train and sent to London. There it remained for certain days upon an oyster dealer's stall, an unprotesting brick in a wall of similar bricks, each placed cunningly, deep shell downwards, that they might retain their sea-water and so keep alive. Three times daily they were sprayed with brine, and, as each castle opened its doors to inhale the grateful draught, the merchant would strike them with his oyster knife, and make the doors slam to precipitately, as a guarantee to passing patrons that his merchandise was alive and vigorous. "There y'are, sir, they're fresh," he said, and handed over two hundred, including Castle Adamant, to the under-manager of a Soho restaurant.

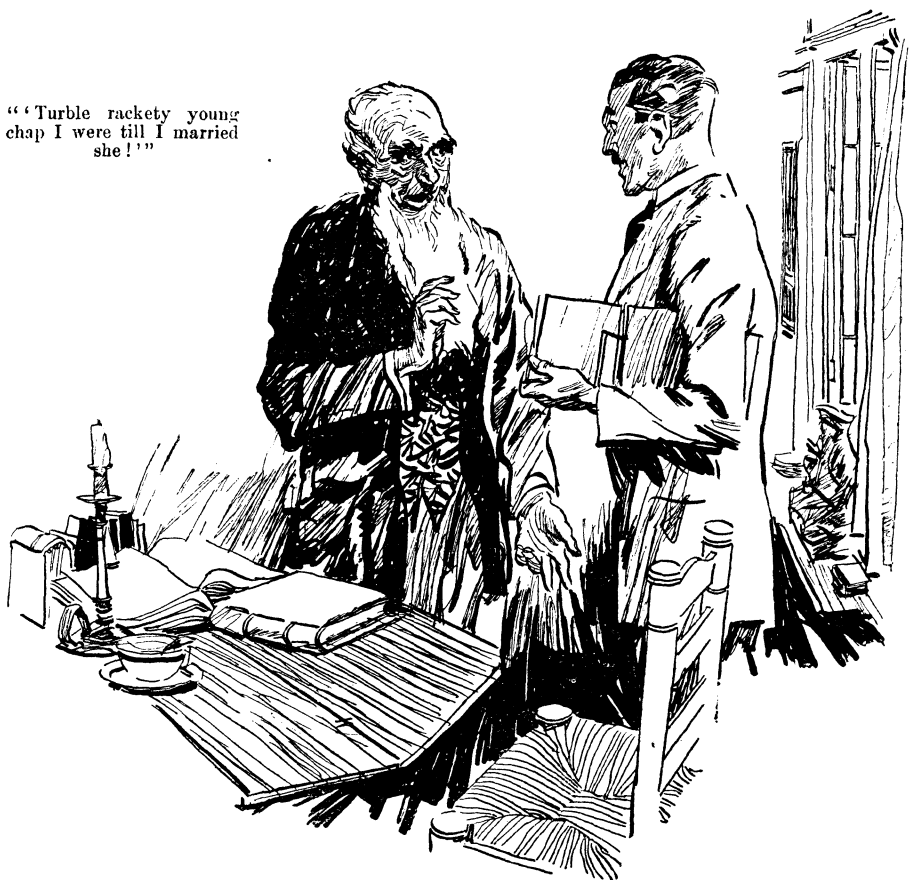
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"Yes," said the diner, "he's a charming fellow, but his life has been as utterly devoid of adventure, as completely lacking in romance, as—as the life of this very oyster I hold upon my fork."





"'Turble rackety young  
chap I were till I married  
she!'"



# THE PROMOTION OF JOSEPH PEGGS

By EDWARD BUCKNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT WILKINSON

ONCE upon a time, not long after the War, a char-à-banc passed through Norton Fitzurse. It moved along High Street, with appropriate comments from its occupants upon such of the inhabitants as were abroad, and then turned down the very steep and winding road to the bridge, and so to Wendlebury. Rounding the last corner without warning, and at a considerable pace, it passed under the very nose of old Joseph Peggs, of the

Lammiter Hospital, missing him by a couple of inches, and a humorist in the back seat, yielding to an uncontrollable impulse of *joie de vivre*, snatched the old man's black felt hat from his head and tossed it into the river. The party then swung round on to the Wendlebury road in a state of great hilarity. Not unaccompanied, however, for Bill Toller, the blacksmith, and his son Jim, who had been drinking a mug of cider at the door of "The Bull," overtook them at the



corner and scrambled on to the footboards, one on each side of the conveyance, where they remained knocking the heads of the revellers together until the top of Castle Hill was reached, when the driver was at last able to put on speed, and father and son dropped off. They then returned, without a word, to "The Bull," and a supplementary draught of cider was offered and accepted.

This anecdote will serve as an illustration both of our readiness to cope with the objectionable proceedings of "vurriners," as we call them in Norton, and of our particular regard for the Lammiter Hospital and its residents. Almshouses in some parts of the country, I understand, involve their inmates in some loss of caste. With the Hospital this is not so, whether owing to the superior delicacy of manners among us, or to some posthumous influence of the spirit of Thomas Lammiter, whose name is so strikingly commemorated by this foundation.

Thomas Lammiter, born and bred in Norton Fitzurse, migrated to London in mid-sixteenth century, and there made a fortune, became a sheriff, died, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate, where you may yet see the fine alabaster monument of himself and his wife, kneeling opposite one another on either side of a reading desk, with a troop of diminishing sons and daughters at their backs. Above hangs his coat-of-arms, with the three lambs and the pious motto *Per agnum Dei itur ad astra*. None of these acquisitions were his when he went up to London from the West; yet in his prosperity his thoughts turned back to Norton, and the first provision in his will was for the foundation here of a "Hospital for Sixe Poore Old Men and Sixe Women of Godly Conversacioun."

It has been my good fortune, for several years past, to be a governor of the Hospital, a position which gives me an excuse for spending more time within and about its gracious walls than I should otherwise dare to spend. For the Hospital is the crown and glory of Norton, and old Thomas Lammiter's money, the fine skill of local masons, and our superlatively mellow local stone, between them raised one of the most beautiful Elizabethan buildings in England. From the black oak of the tiny chapel to the gallery where the twelve old men and women can sit in the sunlight, looking down the sloping garden, with its great yew hedges, to the river bank, there is not a discordant note to break the harmony, not

a whisper but of grave beauty. Even the stir of the High Street is shut out by the massive oaken gates which lead into the little court, where the gilded bust of the founder watches, above his ruff, the doves that flutter about the stone dovecot.

It would be disingenuous to pretend that the human element is invariably in keeping with the gentle quietude of its setting. The twelve pensioners have only attained this haven by virtue of misfortune and hardship, and who will cast stones if the conversation of the six old women is not always as godly as the foundation deed strictly demands, or if five at least of the old men are sometimes a thought peevish and querulous? None of us, I think, who have not qualified ourselves by that anxiety about the next meal which has been the common lot, year after weary year, of all these. I say *five* of the old men designedly, for the sixth—none other than the Joseph Peggs of my opening paragraph—is a notable exception. The halest of all the old men, in spite of his white hair and venerable beard, Joseph is to be seen daily about the town, on little shopping expeditions for his fellow-hospitallers, and the black felt hat and blue coat with silver buttons are welcomed everywhere. We all recognise in him, if the truth must be told, qualities we should like to possess ourselves, and though we look after his upright figure with an affectation of pity in our smiles, as we tell each other "Wunnerful old-fashioned character, Joseph!" yet in our heart of hearts we envy the childlike candour and faith that shine in the eyes behind the silver-rimmed spectacles. For Joseph has the piety of the old school—unquestioning faith in every word of his Bible, which he reads constantly and, to an embarrassing extent, literally—together with a strong sense of humour and a sound basis of natural common-sense.

His tiny sitting-room at the Hospital is always as neat as a new pin; every article has its place, and is there to a hair's-breadth. Once, when I chaffed him mildly about this foible, he replied, with that steadfast glance of his faded blue eyes:

"Ar, sir, 'tes my Ellen as desurve the praise. Turble rackety young chap I were till I married she! But her put I to rights praper!" The old man chuckled, and then suddenly became grave again. "But I mudden't backslide into they careless ways agaan, else how be she to know I when we d' meet above?"

It is this meeting with his Ellen, looked

forward to these twenty years, that lifts him over the stony places that yet remain to be traversed, and makes him the unfailing peacemaker of the Hospital, respected and feared by the most inveterate of the old women.

## II.

ON my return home from a visit to the Hospital, one fine morning last autumn, I was surprised to find Lady Pilsdon's bath-chair drawn up at my front door. Gusts of distant laughter proclaimed that Gomer, who had been propelling it, was now exercising his social gift in the kitchen. Finally the Vicar's hat in the hall made me quicken my pace towards the library, in some curiosity as to the motive of so unusual a combined morning visit. I found them in very characteristic postures—Lady Pilsdon enthroned beside the fire with the grace and repose of a generation which knew how to sit still, and the Vicar perched precariously on the very top step of the ladder, with his nose deep in a volume of controversial theology which I had carefully skied out of harm's way.

"Don't raise your voice, or he'll fall off!" said the old lady, as I came into the room with an exaggerated air of concern.

"What's that? Oh, quite—certainly!" said the Vicar, as though taking an intelligent share in the conversation, and commencing to come down very slowly, with his eyes still glued to the book.

"The fact is," continued Lady Pilsdon, "that he has received a letter, which he may presently be sufficiently collected to show you——"

"The fact is," exclaimed the Vicar, reaching the ground and shutting the book simultaneously, "that we are greatly perplexed——"

"Speak for yourself, Vicar!" broke in the old lady. "I am not perplexed in the least."

"Well, then, I am greatly perplexed by this letter." Here he fumbled for some time, and at length produced the mysterious epistle. "This arrived this morning——" he proceeded, with great solemnity.

"By the post," put in Lady Pilsdon satirically.

"—and we were—that is, I was so worried——"

"May I read it?" I suggested.

"Yes, yes, certainly," said the Vicar, handing it to me, and reopening the book at the place he had been marking with his finger.

It was written in a clerly hand on superfine paper, embossed in large purple letters with the address Ivanhoe, Jubilee Road, Upper Clapstead, N., and ran as follows:

The Vicar,  
Norton Fitzurse.

DEAR SIR,

I should be obliged if you will be good enough to kindly inform me if Mr. Joseph Peggs is still alive and residing in your parish, as I am his grandson, and, being in a position to give him a comfortable home, should be happy to effect same. Apologising for troubling you, and awaiting the favour of an early reply,

Yours sincerely,

SAML. J. PEGGS.

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, gazing blankly at Lady Pilsdon.

"Exactly what I said myself," rejoined the old lady. "And what do you think of Mr. Samuel's proposal?"

"Really," I said, "it takes a little while to grasp the situation, but the first thought that occurs to me is that it would be simply disastrous for old Joseph."

"My dear fellow," cried the Vicar, finally closing the book and coming forward, "it would be the death of him! To take the poor old man out of the Hospital, at his age, and plump him down in a London suburb, among people like this grandson—no doubt a very estimable person——"

"Estimable fiddlestick!" interrupted Lady Pilsdon, tapping her foot on the ground. "However, we're all agreed on that point. Now get on to your conscientious scruples."

"Well, the point is," began the Vicar slowly, "how far you and I, as governors of the Hospital, are justified in weighing such considerations in dealing with such a case. Our duty is to administer the Trust according to the intention of the founder, and it seems to me that we must ask ourselves whether we are justified in opposing the removal of a beneficiary whose relatives are able to support him, and thus preventing another candidate for admission from filling the vacancy. Lady Pilsdon, I'm afraid, thinks the scruple far-fetched, but I'm not easy in my mind about it at all."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Lady Pilsdon. "If you propose to make Joseph Peggs miserable for the rest of his life, in order to benefit that good-for-nothing old scamp Abraham Cowley, I wash my hands of you!" And, with this manifesto, the old

lady's features assumed an expression of resolution of the most daunting character.

The Vicar threw me a glance full of appeal.

"Well," I said, "the position seems to me a very difficult one."

"Exactly," said the Vicar.

"Not at all," said Lady Pilsdon.

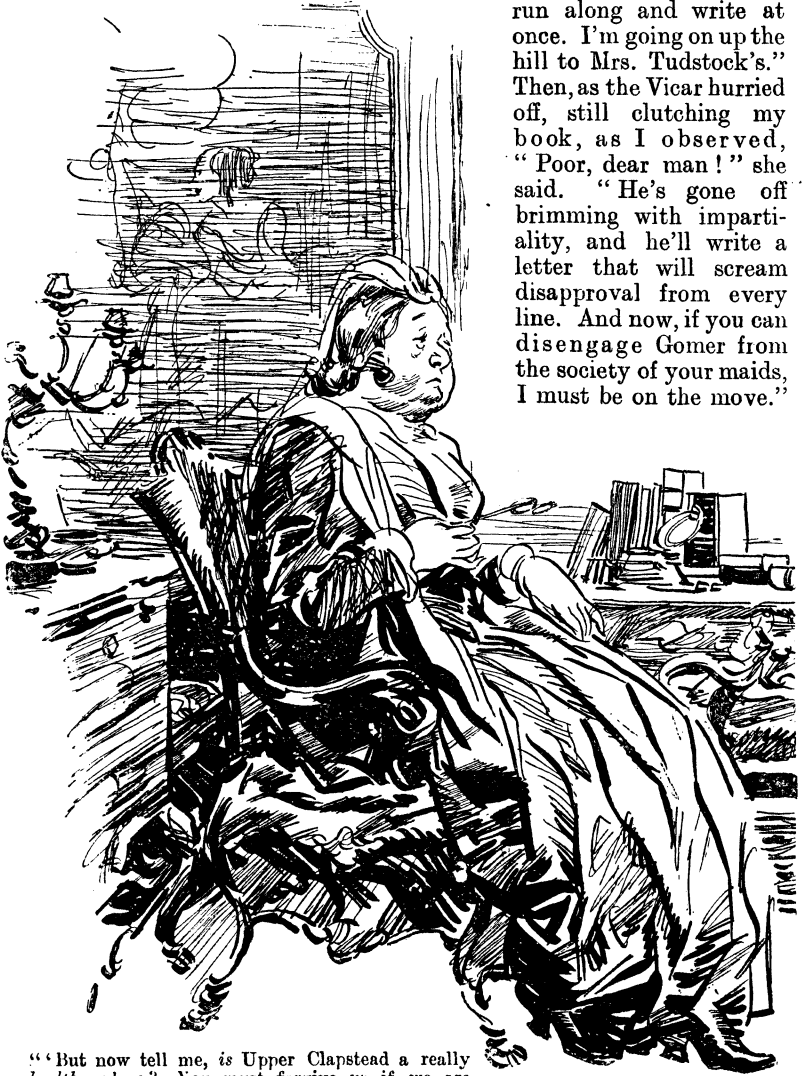
"But," I pursued, "haven't we been rather exaggerating the amount of responsibility which falls upon us? I'm not at all sure that we have any right to oppose the removal of old Peggs"—here I turned to Lady Pilsdon, who treated me to a stony stare of disagreement—"but it still has to be shown that his grandson will be prepared to take him when he knows all the circumstances. My imagination is totally unequal to calling up a picture of the society in which he will be expected to move, but it seems quite possible that Samuel may jib when he finds that his grandfather has spent the last ten years in the Hospital."

"Horrible person!" murmured Lady Pilsdon, who appeared to have formed a most disparaging opinion of the philanthropist.

"Therefore," I concluded, "I propose that the Vicar write to him and place the facts before him unreservedly, but with no expression of opinion. We shall then have

done no less than our duty, and can hope for the best."

"Very well," said Lady Pilsdon. "I don't like it, but I suppose nothing less will satisfy you. Now, Vicar, run along and write at once. I'm going on up the hill to Mrs. Tudstock's." Then, as the Vicar hurried off, still clutching my book, as I observed, "Poor, dear man!" she said. "He's gone off brimming with impartiality, and he'll write a letter that will scream disapproval from every line. And now, if you can disengage Gomer from the society of your maids, I must be on the move."



"But now tell me, is Upper Clapstead a really healthy place? You must forgive us if we are anxious about your grandfather."

### III.

For some days after this nothing was heard, and I began to hope that the Vicar's letter had indeed proved an effective deterrent. Then one afternoon I was on my way to the Vicarage with the cricket club accounts for audit, when just as I got opposite to Lady Pilsdon's house, which is over the way, the Vicarage door opened and the Vicar came down the steps with a stranger. One glance

at the latter stopped my heart dead. He was a short, fat man, attired as for the country in knickerbockers and what I believe is called a "sports coat." As he adjusted upon his head a hat which appeared to be made of sheet-iron faced with Harris tweed, I caught the sparkle of a diamond ring. Beyond all possibility of error this was Mr. Samuel in the flesh.

In another moment I was shaking hands with all the enthusiasm of a long-lost brother, and responding, I hope suitably, to the most handsome expressions of pleasure at making my acquaintance. Mr. Samuel was evidently a talker, and lost no time in taking up his parable.

"As I was saying to our worthy friend," he proceeded—the tail of my eye caught the Vicar's wince—"there's no denying but what it's a shock to

but—well, I'm a Guardian meself when I'm at 'ome!" And he filled out his meaning with a series of nods and winks that were evidently intended to convey a reassuring measure of understanding and complicity.

The Vicar, whose distress was patent, had his mouth open to reply, when Lady Pilsdon's door suddenly opened, and her little maid ran across the road with her mistress's compliments, and would the Vicar bring his visitor to see her, as she was



"Samuel became expansive on the amenities of his neighbourhood."

anyone to find 'is grandfather on the parish. O' course, I understand this 'Orspital's a cut above the ordinary workus, and no doubt you two gents 'as done your best to make things comfortable,

most anxious to make his acquaintance. The readiest of acceptances was forthcoming from the grandson, who dropped behind, as we crossed the road, to inquire from me the exact status in the peerage occupied by the lady who desired to know him. His face dropped a little at my exposition of the late General Pilsdon's K.C.M.G., but it had recovered its complacency by the time we reached the front door, and I fancied that

Upper Clapstead would not be allowed to undervalue the dignity on his return.

There was nothing in Lady Pilsdon's manner, as she welcomed us, to suggest the horror with which she had regarded this interloper on a previous occasion. On the contrary, nothing could exceed the graciousness with which she now received him.

"Really, Mr. Samuel," she professed, "it was unkind of you to descend on your native place without warning. We have so few distinguished fellow-townsmen to boast of that you ought to have given us an opportunity to make much of you."

"You're very good, my lady," responded Mr. Samuel, highly flattered, "but circumstances being a bit delicate, as I might put it—"

"Ah," said Lady Pilsdon, "you're one of those who

Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame!

Well, I won't quarrel with your delicacy, which I'm sure does you honour. But now tell me, is Upper Clapstead a really *healthy* place? You must forgive us if we are anxious about your grandfather. He is so much respected here that his friends will be most concerned to know all about his future home."

Thus encouraged, Samuel became expansive on the amenities of his neighbourhood, and wound up with a complete inventory of "Ivanhoe," from its unrivalled aspect and complete detachment, on which much stress was laid, down through the bathroom (h. and c.) and reliable heating apparatus—"Cost a heap o' money that did"—to the pianola in the drawing-room and the linoleum in the hall, which, it appeared, resembled marble so closely as to deceive the most practised eye.

Throughout this recital Lady Pilsdon sat with folded hands and an expression of delighted admiration that was a miracle of facial control.

"It all sounds most charming, Mr. Samuel," she said, when at last the list was exhausted, "and makes me feel quite envious"—here Mr. Samuel tried to look deprecating and failed—"but," continued the old lady in her most winning tone, "I can't help feeling a little doubt whether your grandfather, at his great age, will really be able to appreciate your beautiful home. I'm an old woman myself, Mr. Samuel, and I know that I wouldn't exchange the surroundings among which I have grown old for a palace."

At this suggestion Samuel's jaw dropped, and his mouth opened to protest, but Lady Pilsdon hurried on to play her last card.

"I see that the same thought has occurred to you," she said, with the sweetest of smiles, "and I congratulate you upon your discernment. Very few men, believe me, would have had the penetration to appreciate it!"

Samuel's fleshy features presented a lively picture of conflicting emotions. He was greatly flattered by praise from such a quarter, but completely taken aback at the point of view which had given rise to it. For a moment his eye shifted desperately about the room; then his mouth stiffened and his tongue resumed its functions.

"It's very kind of you, I'm sure, Lady Pilsdon," he said slowly, "but I couldn't think o' not taking 'im, if that's what you mean. Why, it'd break Mrs. Peggs's heart, she's that set on it. We've been unfortunate, d'you see, never 'aving any kiddies, and—no, I couldn't bear to disappoint 'er after 'er looking forward to it so." And he looked so imploringly at Lady Pilsdon, turning his hard hat round and round in his fingers, that for the life of me I couldn't help feeling something like sympathy with the man for the first time since his appearance. For a moment there was silence, then Samuel repeated in a firmer voice: "No, I couldn't think of it."

"Well," said Lady Pilsdon, accepting defeat with a smile, "I'm certain he couldn't fall into kinder hands. And now I've detained you long enough. Good-bye, Mr. Samuel, and pray give my kind regards to Mrs. Peggs."

Samuel started to his feet with obvious relief, and, wringing Lady Pilsdon's hand with many exclamations of gratitude and pleasure, bowed his way out. Once outside his business-like manner returned, and, with much inward misgiving, I saw him and the Vicar depart at a brisk pace for the Hospital.

#### IV.

I HAD an engagement of long standing to dine that evening with some people in Wendlebury, so that I was unable to keep abreast of affairs, but I had a vague hope of finding a note waiting for me on my return. There was none, however, and I went to bed restless and perturbed, and lay awake for some time, with the events of the afternoon revolving in my head in the futile way common to midnight worries. When I woke next morning, the sun was streaming

into the room, and I found that my house-keeper's solicitude had allowed me to sleep far beyond my usual hour. Even then I felt a marked disinclination to get up, which was increased by the soothing whirr of the mower in the garden. Then the machine stopped under my window, and the voice of Gomer, who always comes to help Eli with the mowing, rose clearly on the still autumn air.

"So er said to Joseph, 'Back you must come 'long wi' I,' er said, 'to my girt glorious house in Lunnon, an' live happy till death do us part,' er said."

"An' Joseph 'ooden't goo?" said Eli.

"Not at the varst er 'ooden't," replied Gomer. "'I've lived in Narton parish, man an' boy, eighty-vive year,' says Joseph, 'an' heer I'll die, if the Lard will.' So then Sam'le begun vor to tell un o' the wunnerful things in his house up to Lunnon, carpets an' feather beds, an' a pianner as'd play by itself—what manner o' thing be that, Eli, do 'ee rackon?"

"Aar," said Eli, "I zeed un over to Wendlebury, at 'The White Hart,' last fair-time 'twere. You puts in a penny. Kick up a wunnerful din, it do. Well, an' what said Joseph to that?"

"Why, then," continued Gomer, "old Joseph were ekal to un. 'I be a turble old man, gran'son,' er said. 'I be too old vor to take delight in a tinklen cymbal. Leave I bide wheer I be,' er said. So then Sam'le er tried un another way. 'You didn't oughter stay heer, gran'fer,' er says; 'tidn't right as how you should bide heer in th' Hospital, an' fill the room of another poor old man as be in need o't.' That strook Joseph arl o' a heap."

"Well, then, so it mid," said Eli. "Theer be a turble deal o' sense to it. An' what come then?"

"Joseph zot theer a longish while, fair moidered in his senses. Then at last er says very slow, 'The Lard's will be done,' er says. 'I'll come with 'ee, Sam'le. But 'ee must give I a little time vor to get my wits together. Reason why; 'tes a martel long time to live in a place, an' then to leave un, Sam'le,' er says. Then the chairs scrouched, an' Betty Mellon vled from the door, thinken as they'd be comen out. So Sam'le went back to Lunnon be the evening train, an' he'm to come vor Joseph this day week."

"Aar!" said Eli profoundly. "Better if er'd never come next or nigh Narton, wi's

dimond ring! Well, us must get on, Gomer; rain a-comen."

This conversation gave me plenty of food for thought as I dressed and breakfasted, and decided me to go round to the Hospital at once and see whether I could be of any use. As I was on my way, the rain predicted by Eli came—a few drops at first, then a steady downpour, which showed no sign of slackening.

In the gateway I ran into the Vicar coming out with every mark of concern on his face.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "you're the very person I wanted to see. Have you heard—oh, you have! Well, I'm most anxious about Peggs. He appears to have got up this morning before anyone was about, and to have gone out in his best clothes, without waiting for his breakfast, and nothing more has been seen of him!"

I stared at the Vicar's troubled countenance for a moment, and then a thought crossed my mind which strengthened into a certainty.

"Can he have gone to Kingcombe?" I said.

Now Kingcombe is a village some three miles from Norton, down the valley, and it was there that Joseph's wife was buried, among her own folk.

The Vicar started. "Of course!" he cried. "Why didn't I think of it? But we must go after him. He'll be wet through and worn out in this rain."

We found Joseph in the water-meadows, bareheaded in the downpour, and talking to himself. As we led him, unresisting, homewards, it was evident that in spirit he was already with the wife he had waited for so long.

\* \* \* \* \*

We did everything possible, but the mental stress and the exposure had done their work, and Joseph never looked like rallying, and we sent a wire to the grandson. As it happened, he was away from home on business when it arrived, and, looking back, I am glad that it was so. It seemed fitter that the old man should die among the people who had known and loved him so long, without the intrusion of that discordant element.

Never, till the last, did he betray any consciousness of our presence; he just lay and murmured happily, and his wanderings were a revelation of that innocent and faithful heart. Then just before the end

he seemed to come to himself, and, reaching out his hand, took that of the Vicar, who was sitting at his side.

"I shall look vor 'ee to come," said Joseph.

If I have written of my old friend in the present tense in this narrative, it is because I have not yet forced myself into the full realisation that we shall never again see his

upright figure going about our streets, nor hear his firm voice leading the responses in chapel.

Lady Pilsdon says that it has all been for the best. No doubt she is right, but when I think of the childless Mrs. Peggs in her expensive house in Jubilee Road, I can only wonder at the strangeness and incalculability of life.



## VALEDICTORY.

**G**OOD-BYE, Old Year, and as you pass  
Stretch out your hands and take with you  
Old deeds, old dreams, that shake with you  
The dying months' dim hour-glass.

Take with you to your well-earned rest  
The dreams God willed might never be;  
Resigned, content, we yield to thee  
All vain desires we once deemed best.

Take in your charitable arms  
All harsh regards, and that regret  
Hardly consumed, and burning yet,  
Which only Time's slow progress calms.

Take all our bitterness of soul,  
All worldly, vain and carnal greed  
To which we gave such careful heed,  
Too blind to see the better goal.

Take all of these, but leave behind  
The memories we hold so dear,  
The love of friends, or far, or near,  
And all high thoughts that cleanse the mind.

Good-bye, Old Year, with some regret,  
With many hopes, we part from you,  
For there remaineth much to do,  
And God's sure patience standeth yet.

CLARE SILVA-WHITE.



"A mile away over the river a steady pin-point of light shone."

# POINTS OF VIEW

By A. R. GRAHAM

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

THREE men sat at a central table in a large room, many-windowed, bare-walled, and stifling hot. Gowan, who was one, was tracing a zig-zag course through the Nigerias, writing and photographing as he went, rejoicing in a man's life and a truce to emotion, with no woman's hand to stir confusion into the masculine brew.

In Nicolsen's airy, wide-verandahed boarding house there was rest and space. The highly-coloured ebb and flow of the trading on the ground floor gave just enough of casual interest, and by its ceaseless day-time movement helped the full savour of his own privileged ease.

But there was Fenn, sarcastic and disquieting, and somehow there was danger.

"Quieter now," Gowan said, breaking a flat silence at last. "What, in the name of

Allah, were you trading this morning? It sounded like one of those revolutions and——"

"Hides," drawled Nicolsen's tired voice. "Caravan, you know—Sokoto crowd—pretty good copy. How do you feel this morning?" he added, and Gowan tried not to feel hurt at the listless, perfunctory kindness.

"The man's queer," he told himself again. "Nothing interests him—he's been out too long—it's the climate. It's getting me, too," he thought, "and only six months of it."

"The fever's gone," he said aloud. "Five days before the next go. . . ."

At last the third man spoke. "Suggestion," he mocked. Both men waited as if for more. Fenn lunched on.



The man's mere presence was a challenge which none took up. Of all strange, vital phenomena, dark, curiosity-compelling enigmas, disturbing psychological puzzles, Gowan placed Fenn first and most exciting, and most important.

This time it was more than the old hunger for understanding, the settled motif of a wandering life. Now the urge came from without; the very air, exhausting and oppressive, had in it a hint of trouble. Something vague pervaded the obvious calm, and Gowan had a blind faith in his fitful instinct. When it spoke to him, he listened, and where it led he followed.

Heaven had given him a masterless, moneyed leisure that made him free and at the same time morally bound him, as a knight of old, to right a wrong that cast a shadow on his path.

Four walls and a man—Africa and a problem! Somewhere within attainable limits of space and time lay the ingredients of a solution. Gowan's hope swung between a feeble despair before the dark, sinewy strength of the man and a wonderful faith in his own equipment of intuition.

And this time the lines of the puzzle lay in approved direction across the map of things. He might fail and not be sadder for it. Here was no sensitive feminine creature to be hurt by mistakes or warped with masculine justice. In a sun-scorched wilderness the issues lay hidden, with river and swamp and malaria in hindering sequence—a man's job!

At last a leaping, almost boundless imagination and a chance-seen pilot lamp met suddenly, after days of blistering heat and nights of oppressive wakefulness, as the hot season waxed to a perfervid climax.

Gowan felt a faint thrill. Romance hovered for a moment over Nicolsen's tin-roofed equatorial trading store. Another man might not have had faith, he flattered himself; it was so easy to be normal, to take things as they came. Fenn was just a lean, dark prospector man, a-sojourning with Nicolsen, the Swede who kept a lonely, harmless hostel over his store on the Niger's banks.

Then what of that oil-fired beam projector? Was it designed by a fool to focus a long thin beam of parallel rays on the dark void of the night?

How the mosquitoes would dance in a mile-long pencil of light—over the river, say! How the curious crocodiles would slide across the waters and look, and silently

float away! Was it a crocodile lure? Gowan wondered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wearily, one late sunset, Nicolsen and the stranger climbed the verandah steps, returning from a shoot.

"Boy!" hailed the host, and a tray of gin and bitters rounded the corner.

"Any luck?" Fenn asked out of a dark corner.

Nicolsen recited the day's bag, a welcome change for canned-food-weary men.

As the first pink gins dulled fatigue and charged their fever-thinned blood, a delicious relaxation bound the group. Those tropic evenings, when the sweet scents of night first float across the still air, barefooted servants come and go, and seductive cock-tails cast their perennial spell, then, if ever, man's mind is at ease. Down go defences, and in the magic of the moment each man sees his neighbour.

The cautions and precautions, the jealousies and restraints, the whole armour and armoury of acquisitiveness are laid by, and the daytime competitors in the struggle for life become the half-shy but talkative friends of a night.

"Jolly peaceful," said Fenn from his long chair, a cigarette-glow throwing into shadow the hollows of a skully head. "It's a hell of a country, but these evenings are all right! And the mornings—all the darned dust and flies don't count. Give me tropics, Africa for choice. . . ."

"Easy for you, you old pirate," said Nicolsen mildly. "You don't have to work in a store, selling niggers yards and yards of Manchester stuff and bags of salt. You trek about. Prospecting's exciting compared to my job."

"So is my job," Gowan put in. "What you want, Nicolsen, is a contrast—rest after hard physical work—it's best. I did three hundred miles last month."

"Well, give me a farm," said Nicolsen suddenly, "at home, with a stream through it, and fishing, meadow grass and a Friesland cross. Church on Sunday, all the folks there, a bit of a talk. . . ."

"And a little walk," Fenn cut across, "*en famille*. I know! Sunday clothes, and the children mustn't dirty their kit—Heaven spare me!"

An absurd vision of a transmuted Fenn, emerging civilised and gentle from a country kirk, made Gowan smile secretly. At peace with life! . . .

All at once, without perceptible move-

ment, Gowan stiffened in his chair. He began to listen intently. Clear, but immensely remote, yet as certain as the sound of guns, the throbbing of a lone drum beat into his consciousness. Simultaneously he was aware that it had been going on for some time. He had heard without knowing. It became an insistent and disturbing sound.

Fenn talked on—he heard nothing. His sinister, black-bearded head lay back comfortably. The intermittent glow showed him smiling amiably.

Nicolsen defended himself. "Well," he parried, "suppose you made a big fortune, what would you do?"

"Spend it."

"How?"

"Quickly."

"Well, what next?"

Gowan was watching from under his hand.

For some reason the answer came quite seriously. "I never worry what's next. Give me pocket-money and a job to tackle, lots of air and a gun. . . ." "Or guns?" said Gowan to himself, as he crawled under his mosquito-bar that night.

He knew he was not to rest—a whole train of ideas was seething and festering in his mind. Fenn, his pilot lamp and guns—these clamoured for attention, while a host of odd remembered trifles arranged themselves into some semblance of order. And away across the southern swamps the ghost of a drum-beat lingered on.

At two o'clock he was down by the store, telling the night watchman how hot it was, how impossible to sleep. Half an hour later he had watched the man round a corner of the compound, and entered the store, like a thief, through the window.

Some minutes later he stood excited and thrilled, while a heavy presentiment of trouble and death grew and filled the musty blackness of the big storehouse.

Ineffectually he tried to pull together the ends of twine that sewed the top end of a bale of cotton cloth, until the folly of lingering there flashed on him. Without caution he fled until, safe back in his camp-bed, he began an old refrain and cursed himself for a coward. From the heart of each long roll of cotton cloth there had been removed a narrow package. For Gowan miscellaneous contraband simply did not count. There was Fenn, the spirit of unrest, and, an impossible length of leagues away, the infernal rhythm of a savage war-drum.

"Guns—trade guns!" he whispered to the night. And again: "I loathe guns!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"A better world if there were no guns," he grumbled peevishly the next day, as his little train of carriers shuffled down the dusty track, and Nicolsen's iron-roofed storehouse slowly disappeared from view to the southward.

Fenn and his dark aims now filled the immediate future. There was a quest that had to be fulfilled, a plot and a foreboding.

The track was rough; the barefoot carriers picked their way delicately. Gowan stumbled along, his mind too busy to think of the way. Everything depended on what he did now, and time pressed. It might be a question of short days—or hours!

Just now, when what he needed above all was common-sense and a nice judgment, he found himself unable to think clearly. Tramping clumsily forward, he failed to get a grip of the facts.

Because he was living in the future of his fears, the present was tangled and blurred. Ghastly motion pictures intruded and forced his attention. Blood-mad devils from the far side of the river, armed savages, all armed with long ugly rifles, dodged through scrub, lurked and peered and rushed forward screaming.

Up-river lay the big trading station, trim bungalows, great stores, Government offices, and English ladies. . . . It was only too easy to picture a native rising. And for Gowan the picture had all the stark quality of a thing actually seen.

But it was an absurd tale for the remote official ear. Gowan could see very clearly the amused incredulity on the Commissioner's clear brown face, the polite comfort he would bring.

No, he must have something more to go on—real evidence that guns were leaking through across the swamp, that a hundred miles away a big war-drum throbbed at night. If there was time—

With the midday sun at his back, he turned sharply, right-handed. "The river," he told the headman briefly, and gave a line due east.

Little twisting, ragged paths criss-crossed through the bush, hopelessly confusing to a compassless white man, but easy reading to a bush boy who carries the true North in his heart.

Gowan wanted to see the wide Niger slipping quietly over the sandy shallows under the moon. Down there, somewhere,



"A bell pinged. Two shots."

he felt, a pilot lamp would be threading a long thin beam. A hundred miles of swamp on the far shore still baulked his imaginings. Only the secret creatures of the black waterways could live there.

The phantom night-time drumming, remembered as an actual, shadowy back-

ground to all that train of converging suspicions, lured him on.

"How far," he suddenly asked of Ali, "can you hear them big drum?"

The steward-boy considered a moment. "Perhaps two sleeps, sir," said he, detached and superior. His master was a



"And a moment of absolute blank."

great propounder of foolish and inconsequent questions, amusing sometimes, but——

"You never hear him night-time down for Jola?"

"No, sir."

"Ask them carrier boy."

"Carrier no hear him drum, sir."

With a worried air of obstinate disbelief, Gowan walked on. The great river held the answer to it all.

The tracks began to lead gently downwards, and the face of the bush changed

slightly. Bits of juicy green appeared accidentally, and the air took on weight. Gowan's clothing clung damply from neck to knee. The party entered a filmy, dancing haze which was the steamy breath of old Niger.

At last a steely glint came up from below, and the party halted. In preparation for the night they fed and rested, while two good men went on to prospect for canoes.

All day the pressure of time had weighed heavily on Gowan, but when at last the long canoes slid, faintly rocking, by the swamp

edge, a sense of fulfilment eased the tension ; he lay back on his cushion and faced the far bank where he had embarked.

For hours there was nothing but the changeful face of the water as it shallowed or deepened, rippled over a sand-bank or swirled purposefully down one of its thousand shifting channels. The canoes followed the still water inshore as far as possible, with occasionally cuts across the current in the deep bays.

On the right, as they worked up stream, a blank wall of leaf and stem seemed to be without a solitary breach. Gowan knew that countless narrow channels existed in fact, threading the swamp with a mazy tracery of deep-water channels, miles of them, and not a sign or a mark to show, at the end of their infinite meandering, where the dead water joined, through a fringe of reeds, the rippling of the main stream.

Across, the far bank was invisible, save for a vague disconnected edge of darker night that rose and dipped deceptively out of a silver haze.

"E, E, E," intoned the weary canoe men at last, and swung on their poles.

A faint yellow beam impinged on the tops of the wavelets by the reed bank and danced to their ripples. A mile away over the river a steady pin-point of light shone ; at such a distance, even, the path of the beam was only a few yards wide. Coming from a height, it only struck the water near the opposite shore. Night traffic on the river was almost non-existent, yet someone had been at great pains—that light was not meant to be seen. It could only be seen from a small area of slack water—the bay in which Gowan's canoes lay swinging to anchor poles.

"Luck!" breathed Gowan, dropping naturally to a plotter's whisper. Then, in almost the same breath, he contradicted himself. "Bad business," he said. "I wish I was out of it. Someone's got to be shot."

The puzzled boys saw him staring at the light, talking to himself. They huddled together and whispered, scanning the empty reach.

"Please, sir, tell these men what they go do. They fear too much."

"All right, Ali, get up stream and camp. Hide the canoes. And hurry!"

All night Gowan sat, anxious and suffering, behind a screen of tall strong reeds ; there the banks of a deep waterway, serpentine from the river, were firmer.

His own danger became more real. In the

short space of days at Nicolsen's his spirit had come into contact with Fenn's, and the unassailable strength of purpose he had felt had shocked and thrilled him.

Fenn would not look back. Through the small hours Gowan's certainty grew. It was death for him to be seen, but the rank growth in front was thick and adequate cover.

All around and close up the life of the swamp passed him unheeding. Waterfowl clucked and splashed loudly. Thousands of mosquitoes assailed him. At dawn a canoe-load passed almost noiselessly by. In the stern lounged Fenn, sprawled and sleepy, formidable even in repose. Gowan crouched to the earth as he passed. This time there could be no mistake, for some of the long bundles that weighed the canoe to the water's edge showed the stuff that was in them—blue steel. It was easy to picture the stealthy, hurried loading in the dark.

"Give me a leopard in a cave," thought Gowan, as he began to breathe again, "rather than follow that!"

But the next move lay dead easy, down stream, with only the fierce sun to combat. It was the Commissioner's job. At midday he pulled the canoes into the reeds for four hours' rest, and himself slept in the shadow of a squat cotton tree.

He awoke utterly confused. Immensely tall and dark, the devil himself stood beside him, smiling ironically down.

"Better not move!"

But the very power of movement was gone. Gowan lay, blinking stupidly, trying to realise that this was Fenn in the flesh, who leaned against the tree bole and smiled sarcastically.

"You've been followed since you started, old dear." And after a pause: "Your time's up—you're for it! Understand?" Fenn tapped his gun and saw, unmoved, the quick horror leap to his victim's eyes. There was not even a sudden movement of attack or flight.

Gowan was patently helpless. He stared up, wide-eyed and wondering, into his murderer's light grey eyes. Even now, with the fear of death in his blood and bones, the vital puzzle of Fenn's personality filled a part of his mind.

"Pray, if you want to," sneered Fenn. "I give you three minutes."

Silence.

What scarlet mobile lips showed under the black moustache! Fear and sick disgust did not quite stifle a morbid admiration.

To be so bold and sure and strong, master of himself and circumstance!

Then a sudden light broke over it all. "You're not an Englishman." A quaint relief showed in Gowan's voice, as if the removal of an unjust suspicion mattered.

"No," Fenn answered slowly, "enemy. Never mind about me. You and your psychology—you'd better have stuck to Nicolsen—saved your skin, perhaps. Thought he was slow and stupid, did you?"

"He's——" Gowan began, but no words came. Nicolsen did not seem to matter.

"Wouldn't hurt a fly, eh? But he trades guns to the Munchaus. You know what that means—a fat profit and hell let loose."

"There must be a motive—Nicolsen's not an enemy."

"Motive? Well, I guess he's got a motive all right—something more than dollars. The man's mad," Fenn snapped, after a moment, "mad as a hatter. He's just stuck there, having fever and seeing no one and thinking himself crazy. Motive? The motive's a girl—what else? A plump Dutcher girl, I guess, and a farm. Oh, yes, a farm and a snug life in the country. Nothing else counts. He'd poison the whole British nation for that, or the dollars to buy it. He's crazy, I tell you."

Fenn stopped. He looked down from his height to Gowan, limp and white, considering, bit off an oath and scowled fearfully.

"It's no use," he said; "I oughtn't to have talked. Can't pot you sitting there." He pulled out a heavy watch. "See that? It's got a bell-alarum. I'll give you a chance—get your gun. You're not a bad sort," he said, when Gowan stood before him shakily, gun in hand. "I've seen worse.

Look! I'll set it—a couple of minutes." Fenn put the watch on the ground. "Stand there!" he ordered kindly, like one talking to a child.

A dozen paces apart they waited for the bell. Tense beyond feeling, Gowan was aware of nothing in all the world but a vague, spectral Fenn, his easy stance and slight ironical smile.

A bell pinged.

Two shots and a moment of absolute blank. Gowan's knees began to tremble violently—he was falling. But he straightened and walked stiffly across, unhurt, to Fenn, who was somehow lying on his side, his hat off.

"Heavens!" said Gowan, and quickly knelt. He opened the big man's shirt and pulled it across again. Then he held the black head tenderly and tried desperately to think of something—he knew not what—something very important that just eluded his grasp. The wakened men made a large whispering circle.

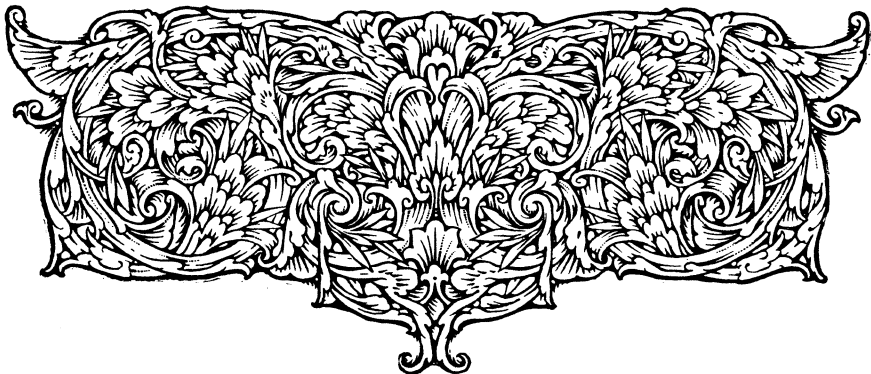
"Your luck!" Fenn muttered hoarsely, and never spoke again. Almost to the end a faint mocking smile made the facts seem more unreal and the issue impossible. But he was dying, and an intent gravity succeeded, and then the serene indifference of death itself.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the way to the Commissioner's headquarters, with the stream to help, the canoes kept the mid-stream and the banks slipped steadily past, wrapped in a shimmering haze.

With the end of the trip as a goal the men poled strongly. Gowan they eyed distrustfully.

"A bringer of trouble—a slayer—who talked aloud to himself—Allah!"



# THE RULING POWER

By ALAN SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK R. GREY

THIS is not a story of heroes with indomitable souls, muscular limbs, and that clean line from jaw to chin, or of women fairer than night. It paints not the abyss of love, the poisoned tooth of jealousy and the tragedy of revenge. It portrays no dizzy escape or triumph of the superman. It is rather a leaf out of the life of one Percy J. Pillinger, who, with his apologetic nature, was the least likely, of all the men I knew, to plumb the depth of human emotion.

Picture him, then, some five feet four in height, a sallow skin, sloping shoulders from which his clothes seemed momentarily slipping, a small, pinched face and a deprecating manner—as though he felt that his invasion of this vale of tears was a prodigious error on the part of some Destiny whose mandate he did not feel at liberty to criticise.

It was written without any shadow of turning that he should marry, and he did. It seems inevitable that men like Pillinger pick out the type of woman by which they are forthwith swamped. Perhaps they are not the active agents in the matter. I can imagine Pillinger, for instance, gradually becoming aware that he was expected to marry his particular fate, and asking in his gentle, little voice if she would not make him happy for the rest of his life.

Anyway, she married him—a whale of a woman, whose slightest gesture might almost have imperilled his safety. It would be a vain thing to try and picture her, but, leaving out her vast physical proportions, saying nothing of her deep voice with its latent threat, and passing over her insatiable appetite for all that Pillinger could not give her, she was in truth the little man's antithesis no less than the arbiter of his outward existence. I say outward, because there was a phase of Pillinger that remained beyond her reach. It was, no doubt, her complete consciousness of this that led to their first open breach.

He had stuffed himself as far back as

possible into a big chair beside the fire. On his knees was a thin leather-bound book of blank sheets, in his fingers a pencil. His vague, blue eyes searched the ceiling with an expression in which wistfulness and content were curiously mingled. It was evident that at the moment his wife was far away. This had lasted for some time, when Mrs. Pillinger laid down her knitting and fixed him with a masterful glance.

"I'd like to see that book, James."

He smiled at her with exactly the look bestowed by a spaniel on an irritated mastiff. "It wouldn't interest you, Maria. It's merely a little way I have of passing the evening."

Mrs. Pillinger's voice rose a trifle. "You mean I wouldn't understand it."

"Not at all, my dear, not at all."

"One of your weak points, James, is that I know what's in your mind better than you do yourself. That's poetry. You always look so sickly when you're trying to write it."

Pillinger gave a little sigh. "Yes, Maria, it's poetry."

"And what good is it?" she demanded heavily.

Pillinger hesitated. In the back of his head was the fixed belief that all poetry was good. He knew that it was certainly good for him, and afforded the only relief from the semi-detached Hades he called home. But what general good it was he could not really say, unless it afforded a similar relief for other men in the same unfortunate position.

"That's rather hard to answer," he said slowly. "I only know it's beautiful and"—he hesitated a second—"it's different."

His wife stiffened. "From me, I suppose you mean."

"From everything," he put in hastily. "It—er—it lifts one out of things."

"Out of business, for instance?"

"Oh, yes, especially business. It's impossible to think of them together."

Mrs. Pillinger was dangerously silent

for a moment. "I've an idea," she said presently, "that you're getting lifted out of business a bit too often."

"I hope not, my dear."

"Read it," she commanded.

The little man stared at her. "Would you understand it, Maria?" he ventured in deprecating tones.

"I will if it's any good. Read it."

Pillinger licked his lips, which had become strangely dry. He was afraid to obey—he had not stuff enough in him to disobey. He knew that what he read would be reduced to shreds. It was like throwing pearls before—but no, he could not go as far as that. As he began to read, his wife settled herself mountainously, while her broad face became a complete blank.

"How beautiful the silver moon to-night!

How sleek and cold her silver-tinted rays!

Why is it that so far she always stays?

How is it that she always is so bright?

When I was young it was my dear delight

With childish voice her rounded orb to praise;

Now I am come to older, wiser days,

I think that when an infant I was right.

I wonder if she shines on other boys

With such good nature as she shined on me,

I wonder if the Hottentot enjoys

Her silver light beside the tropic sea,

And if some foreign poet now employs

His pen in writing lunar poetry."

Mr. Pillinger's voice died away with a little quiver. He was greatly moved. The thing had stirred his depths. All the time he read he had been picturing some companion of his soul lying prostrate at his feet and drinking in this music of the soul with understanding ears and shadows in her eyes. But now he was painfully conscious that there were no shadows in Mrs. Pillinger's eyes. He laid down the book, and there ensued an ominous silence.

"Is that poetry?" There was a note in the tone that he recognised.

"Yes, Maria—at least, I hope so."

"What kind?"

"It's called a sonnet, and is held to be the most difficult form of all."

She nodded. "I can believe that much."

"The first part is called the octette, and the second the sextette, because they have eight and six lines respectively," he explained hopelessly.

"I'd sooner have a quartette," she announced. "And you say that that sort of thing lifts you out of business?"

Pillinger flared up a little. "It's a great consolation."

"And might I ask why you need a consolation? I don't."

"Perhaps it's not so much that," he parried, "as it is that one sometimes has something inside one, and it's a great help to get it out. You feel that you owe it to the world at large."

Her brows went up. "Do you?"

"Yes; and really, Maria, I don't think that I should have to sit here and defend poetry, the most beautiful thing in the world—the one thing that will live for ever."

"Will what you just read live for ever?"

"I hope so. I've had three things accepted by 'The Honey Bee'; that's a little magazine of verse that you probably don't know."

"You're quite right, I don't. Is that all you have to say?"

Pillinger nodded faintly. It was all useless, as he knew it would be. He had given away the thing that for years was indeed a consolation, and what had possessed him to do it he could not tell. Then into his drab reflections came the voice of Maria, heavy, dominant, and crushing, the voice of Fate.

"You say, James, that you have something inside you, and it helps to get it out. Well, you're the only one it can help, so I hope you've got it all out. But it beats me why a man of your age should carry on like that. If that's the sort of thing that lives for ever, then I want to die now. But I'm not going to die till you get over being lifted out of business by talking through your hat to the moon. I won't put up with it, and no sensible woman would. Do you get paid for that stuff?"

"No, my dear."

"I don't suppose that"—here she paused as though struck by new suspicion—"I don't suppose that you went so far as to pay for having these things printed."

Mr. Pillinger's sallow face turned crimson. "The merest trifle, Maria, the merest trifle."

The air throbbed. In the midst of its pulsations Mrs. Pillinger rose like a threatening mountain range.

"Well, James, all I have to say is that you have been leading a life of deceit. You take not only your thoughts, but your money, from your business and put them into trash. Is that fair to me—or anyone? This thing stops now—to-day. Do you hear?"

"I hear, Maria," he said desperately, "but you don't mean that."

"You try it on again, and see whether I mean it or not. You ought to know by



this time that you can't keep very much from me."

It was on the tip of his tongue to retort that he had been writing poetry for ten years, then thought better of it. The result could only be further torture and inquisition. He searched her face for some trace of mercy, but found none.

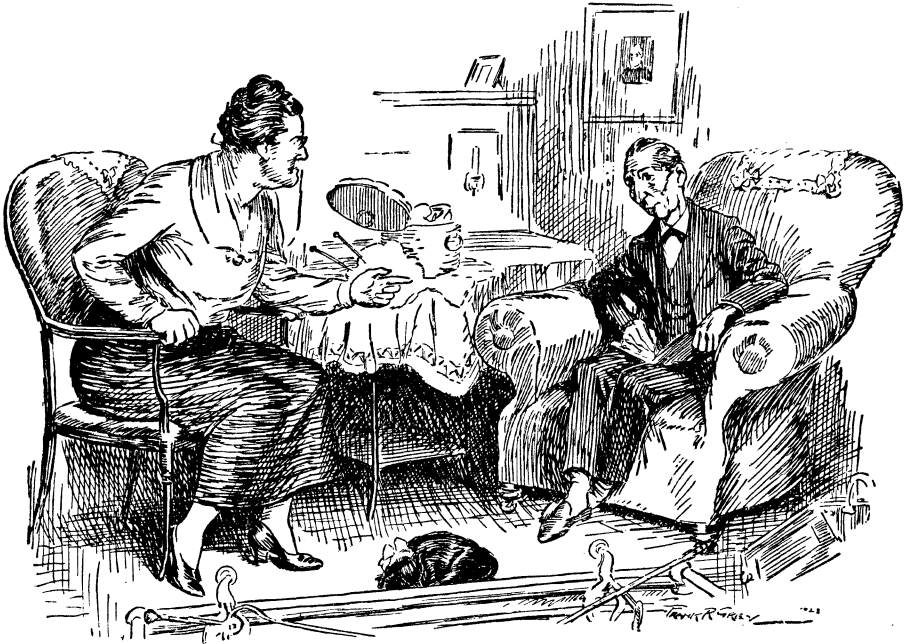
"If you were deprived of something you were very fond of, what would you do?" he ventured.

She looked down at him derisively. "I'd get something else that didn't cost anything."

He walked back to the shop next morning

for the travel of his fancy. Spices he found particularly potent. But now that the bubble, which was, after all, the most real thing in his life, had been pricked, these burdened shelves presented only the memory of a paradise whose gates were closed, and when informed by an officious assistant that lard had dropped a halfpenny a pound, he replied in terms that could not profitably have been used in any business transaction.

It was a long day, with no light at the end of it. He went home beaten, morose, and disillusioned. It proved to be a dull evening, with no further reference to poetry. Maria sat reading a magazine



"I'd like to see that book, James."

after a broken night, part of which was spent in examining Maria's heavy features in search of something he did not find. It was only at such hours that he could get a really good stare at her. There had been occasions on which his lips moved in the gloom, breathing sentiments that were cut off short when Maria Pillinger chanced to stir in her sleep. To-day, as he walked, his lips still moved.

Reaching the shop, he surveyed its well-ordered contents with profound disgust. There was a time when currants took him to Greece, flour conveyed him to the Canadian prairie, and figs were a passport to Africa. It was a cheap method

with a yellow back, on which he saw the depiction of a ruddy Hercules rescuing a scantily-clad lady from a band of Mexicans. Presently his wife put the thing down with a throaty sigh of content.

"It's a pity, James, that you can't write this sort of story. People read them."

Pillinger shook his head. "I'd sooner be found dead than sign a thing like that."

Maria grunted. "Of course you can't, I know that. It isn't in you. This was written by a man who probably did all these things himself. He led the life. I'd like to know him; it would be quite a change," she added thoughtfully.

"It isn't art," he said doggedly.

"Perhaps not, though I don't know what you mean by art. But it's worth money."

The little man put out a hand. He was now quite reckless. "Let me see it."

Ten minutes later he looked up. "It's rot—situations are crazy, the woman is a fool, the setting is impossible, and no such man ever lived."

Mrs. Pillinger smiled, but not benignantly. "Is it any more crazy than what you read me about the moon?"

"Maria, can't you leave just one small piece of myself to myself?"

She rose austere. "Yes, if, instead of paying, you can get paid."

Left to himself, Pillinger took up the magazine, though his fingers almost shrank from the contact. He began to read, not with any critical intent, but to try to find out just what Horace Riverwood, the author, was driving at. Moments slid by. A dull flush crept slowly to his hollow temples. The shop faded away, and Maria herself receded to an infinite distance. The little man was alone with romance.

"By George," he whispered, "I must manage to meet that fellow somehow! It didn't get me the first time, but now——"

He spent the next day in a sort of dream, broken here and there by incursions of prunes and butter. He found himself continually asking how such a situation would be regarded by a man like Riverwood, and whether the latter must not, in the back of his head, despise one who spent his life between a pair of scales and a high stool. The thing became so distressing that he left the shop in mid-afternoon, went straight to the magazine office, and demanded a letter of introduction. An hour later he halted outside a small house in Brixton.

There was nothing to betray the genius inside. Pillinger peered at the drab brick walls, and finally determined that the study must be at the back, away from noise. He had no idea what he should say to Riverwood. He just wanted to breathe the same air for a moment. Perhaps the great man would talk. And he could use that with Maria.

At his knock a large woman came to the door. She was so like Maria that it took his breath away. Then he perceived the difference. Where Maria was fierce, this person looked gentle. There was no defiance in her manner. She nodded amiably, she spoke quietly, and even smiled when he

asked for Riverwood. She seemed a little surprised at the letter.

"Of course I don't want to interrupt him," explained the little man. "If to-day isn't convenient, I can come again."

She glanced at him oddly. "It will be quite all right. This way, please."

Pillinger followed. At the back of the tiny hall she opened a door.

"Someone to see you, Horace."

Pillinger went in, wondering why he had come. At a small table sat a little man, much about his own size. There were the same lean cheeks, the same thin neck, the same sloping shoulders. He was, perhaps, a shade older than Pillinger, but had been cast in the same mould. The only real difference was that his lips were tight where Pillinger's were uncertain, and his eye had a sharp, determined light. Pillinger felt it even before he sat down.

"I hope it's all right that I came in to-day," said the latter, with a touch of awe. He had seen the battered typewriter surrounded by a heap of manuscript.

Riverwood nodded. "Quite—I've done my bit for to-day."

"It was just to say how much I enjoyed that adventure story of yours in 'The Vivid.'"

Riverwood grunted. "Oh, that! I'm glad you liked it. Don't care too much for it myself."

"What!"

The great man shook his head. "I didn't think it would get over. Fact is, I couldn't tell how the darn thing was going to end myself—till I got there."

"How very extraordinary!"

"Not if you're turning out one of those jobs every month. It's machine work after a while. The typewriter does it, I don't."

"I call it genius," said Pillinger.

Riverwood laughed outright. "Do anything of that kind yourself? You look as though you might write."

The little man blushed. "Yes—er—that is, a little poetry." He felt as though he were baring his very soul, but here he was on holy ground.

"I went through all that, and got safely over it. Found it made trouble at home, though."

Pillinger thrilled, and leaned forward. "I have had something of the same kind. Was it—er—domestic?"

"Very."

"And you got round it?"

Riverwood lit an enormous pipe. "Speak—"

ing impersonally, of course, I didn't find myself till I found this job. Matter of fact, I used to be a barber, and I suppose that made me automatically apologetic. That's when I wrote poetry. Like to hear some of it, since you're in that line?"

A sensation that made his breath come fast was creeping over Pillinger. What fate had brought him hither? How far might not this parallel be carried? Then he remembered the gentle face at the door.

"I'd love to hear it. You're very kind."

Riverwood grinned. "Not when I read my own poetry. Listen to this!

When'er I see the sea, it seems to me  
I am so small, it is so very vast;  
I think in grief of my own youthful past,  
And what a fool I sometimes used to be:  
But now that I'm a full-grown man and free,  
And master of my destiny at last,  
I feel just like a little pebble cast  
Upon the shore—a stone of low degree.

How often in the dead and dreary years  
Have others felt what I now deeply feel?  
How often have they watered with their tears  
The long ago? How often do they steal,  
With hurrying feet and tortured by their fears,  
Some secret sin to openly reveal?"

Pillinger drew a long breath. "Wonderful, wonderful! I would have given anything to have written that about being 'tortured by their fears' and those words 'secret sin.'"

Riverwood laid aside his pipe, his eyes sparkling. "Well, to tell you the truth, I stopped just in time. I thought I had the world by the tail."

The little man shuddered involuntarily. "Please go on."

"Poetry was making me even meeker than the barber shop. My missus saw this and acted on it. Result was that I couldn't call my soul my own. I was a sort of human doormat. Ever hear of a similar case?" He paused and stared hard at his visitor.

The sallow cheeks reddened ever so slightly. "I heard of one something like it a while ago."

"I thought you had, the minute I saw you. That poetry of mine isn't wonderful at all—it's pure balderdash. I know it now, and don't make any bones about saying that the man who writes that kind of stuff will never stand up to a healthy woman. I didn't."

"Oh!" said Pillinger faintly.

"It's the truest thing in the world. Now, you and I are very much alike—I noticed that too. What is your chest measure?"

"Thirty-three."

"You beat me by half an inch. And your neck?"

"Size thirteen is quite comfortable."

"Same here. But that's not the real reason I couldn't stand up. It's poetry—the kind we write."

Pillinger edged a little closer. His heart was beating fast. "Then you think——"

"I don't think at all. I've proved it. She"—here he jerked his chin at the door—"put it all over me till I made the great discovery that if you write blood and thunder and romance you can live it. I began by making a man do on paper to his wife the things I wanted to do to mine, and, by George, I did them!"

"Never!" stammered Pillinger.

His host indulged in a pitying glance, then raised his voice to a shout.

"Martha!"

The door opened, it seemed, in the same second.

"Yes, dear?" said a gentle voice.

"Tea for two, please."

Followed a murmur of acquiescence, and the door closed. Riverwood relit his pipe and puffed contentedly.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "can you do that?"

Pillinger smiled nervously. "I couldn't think of it."

"Would you like to?"

"I'd give half of what little I've got."

"It need not cost you anything. What's your line?"

Pillinger reddened again. "Groceries."

"Good. That's a sight better than barbering. You won't be out a single prune. When you feel like the devil about things in general, put it on paper. Very soon you'll get hold of a character who can stand up to every kind of woman that was ever born. Then take the tip from him, and act on it. She'll be so surprised that you can get in quite a lot before she takes breath. Keep on piling it up, so that she never quite recovers. It will be hell for the first day or two; but that's all." He paused for a moment, shooting a swift glance at his visitor. "I'll bet I'm not a bit like what you expected to find."

Pillinger admitted this truth.

"Or what your wife thinks I am, if she ever read my stuff?"

Pillinger chortled. "She thinks you're as big as a barn and have a devilish air."

The great man nodded. "That's exactly what my wife thinks to-day."

The door opened without a sound, and Mrs. Riverwood entered with tea for two. She did not look at Pillinger, but regarded her husband with an expression of affectionate pride that was unmistakable. It was obviously a privilege for any woman to serve him.

"Thank you, Martha," said Riverwood.

There fell a little silence. Then Pillinger's host smiled knowingly. "As I see it now, the important thing is not what you know

the better. Blood helps, so you needn't be afraid of that. Leave out the moon stuff, unless it's a girl. Stick it down south of the equator, because the public—my public—thinks that most anything can happen there. Then get down and roll in it, and you'll succeed. Have some more tea?"

"No, thank you," said Pillinger dizzily. The room had begun to swim, and he experienced a great hunger to be alone.

Riverwood glanced at the typewriter.

"Well, all this is from the inside. I hope it will be some use. I'd patent the thing if I could."

"I think you have saved a man's life," replied Pillinger slowly, and reached for his hat.

He left that Brixton home of genius with mingled mirth and exaltation. At one superb gesture the gate of freedom had been swung wide. He knew that he could do this thing, and the consciousness stirred him profoundly. And what surprised him most of all was that he began to be a little sorry for Maria.

During the next few weeks it seemed, too, that she was a little sorry for him.

There were no

further attacks on poetry. Pillinger was painfully careful on his part not to betray the fact that for half the day he had been sitting in the little back office of the shop, pouring out his soul on voluminous sheets that immediately became the subject of whispered conversations among the clerks. He wrote forty thousand words in thirty days, and felt good for as much more. He was rolling in it. At the end of the month, and just as he approached the consummation



"Tea for two, please."

you are, but what your wife thinks you are. You start something like this, and she will hang medals round your neck till you're tired of wearing them. But, mind you, it's the medals that you wear at home that count. You needn't ever tell her the truth, for she wouldn't believe it. Write something just as far from groceries as you can, put your name at the bottom, sell it, and leave the rest to her. It doesn't matter if the thing is impossible—fact is, the more that way,

of his work, Maria regarded him one evening with a new expression that aroused all his fears.

"I have something to tell you, James," she began slowly.

Pillinger tried to meet her eye—and failed. He was not yet ready for the test.

"You probably remember what I said a while ago about your writing."

Pillinger quivered. "Yes, my dear."

"And that I thought if you could write something very different, you wouldn't be making such a fool of yourself?"

"Yes, my dear, I remember that particularly." He felt that he could be humble for just a little longer. The hour was near.

"Well, what I meant was something like this."

With a movement slow and inflexible as Fate, Maria drew out a roll of paper that her husband's fascinated eyes instantly recognised as manuscript. So strange and

ominous was it that he sat transfixed. As in a dream her voice sounded like the deep mutter of distant guns. It was a story cast in a tropic island, well south of the equator. Palms, blood—and plenty of it—love, passion, revenge, beauty, strength and heroism—all were there. As she approached the climax, the tones of the authoress trembled with real emotion. Pillinger also trembled, but with emotion of a different kind. When she finished, his wife laid down her papers, fixed on Pillinger an eye glittering with triumph, and spoke as one who has run the gamut of the human heart.

"That is the sort of thing I mean. I never tried it before, but now I've a good mind to keep it up. What do you think of it?"

The little man made a curious noise in his throat. "Will you excuse me for a minute, Maria?" he whispered. "I feel rather queer this evening."



## LONG-AGO JULYS.

**S**OMETIMES, when winter nights are long,  
I shut my tired eyes  
And listen to the lovely song  
Of long-ago Julys.

Oh, when the dawn comes misty-white,  
Ere the first lark can stir  
O'er the last footsteps of the night,  
I smell the lavender.

Here, morning is a bridal thing  
Where bridal feet have been;  
Each little border has its king,  
Each winding path its queen.

And as the shadows longer grow  
Beneath the ancient pear,  
Tall lilies waft a message slow  
To greet me unaware.

And when at last the day-long race  
Is over with its din,  
When to his cloud-pavilioned place  
The strong man has gone in,

Then as the white moth passes by,  
And night dews gather fast,  
Soft-fingered Sleep comes stealing nigh  
And finds me at the last.

O starry host, O lilled peace,  
That comes when twilight dies,  
Give me a long and longer lease  
Of long-ago Julys!

FAY INCHFAWN,

*Author of "Through the Windows of a Little House."*

# MISS MAUGERSBURY'S FLUTTER

By BERTRAM LEIGH

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM HATHERELL

**S**HEER from the distant skyline the long road dropped gradually into the village, crossing a shallow stream by a stone bridge. Immediately beyond the bridge stood a cottage, built of the same warm, grey stone, and with a little garden around its ancient girth. In this cottage dwelt Miss Maugersbury. "Morsbury," she pronounced the name, proud of the fact that it could be pronounced differently from the way it was spelt. It put her, she thought—despite her poverty and humble, even humiliating, position in local society—in a class apart from all in the neighbourhood. Even the wealthy Miss Lawson could not juggle aristocratically with her name's pronunciation as she could with hers. That, at least, was something still withheld from the claws of Chance. She had her name, and no one could take it away from her; nor would she now, at her time of life, be tempted to change it for another. Miss Maugersbury she was, and Miss Maugersbury she would remain.

She had memories, as everyone else has, and in her memories there shone one starry romance, and one only. He had appeared to love her for a season, as so many men appear to love; that was all. But it was not of that she so constantly dreamed. Her dreams were more material, or had become so during the harder years. That she had dreamed differently once—for a season and a season's aftermath—is nothing germane to her story. She dreamed now of past amenities, amenities which, after so long a period of dispossession, had become endowed with magical properties belonging, in truth, to nothing whatever in our transitory state. But no one could have convinced her of this vanity concerning them, nor of the vanity of her estimation of their importance. She cherished her memories of such things, and fostered her desire for them, though but for

only once again in her life, assiduously, almost fanatically. She was a woman ridden by an idea; exclusively she lived for it, schemed for it, worked for it. And this is what came of it in the end.

It was a Saturday morning, and the church clock, from the curious, domed, eighteenth-century tower, was chiming the hour of ten as she left her cottage to purchase a few necessaries in the village. She had done this, day after day, certainly without fail on Saturdays, regularly for more years than she cared to reckon; and now, for the first time, the habitual was, somehow, not the habitual; it had an extended meaning, it held a thrill. It was, in fact, the prelude to the great event.

A little way ahead of her she saw an elderly acquaintance, a Mrs. Betts, whom her more vigorous steps—she was not so much over fifty—soon overtook. They proceeded, as was their wont, to pass the time of day, and Miss Maugersbury heard the same recital of family ailments as she had heard the last time they had met, which had been the day before the yesterday, and as she had heard the time before that, and many and many a time before then. Patiently she had always listened; this morning alone she listened impatiently, cut the gossip short, and hurried on. Yet—yes, she had to admit it—she had nearly told that garrulous old fool all about it, had nearly confided in her about what was singing in her heart. But she must tell nobody; of course she must tell nobody. Everybody would laugh at her; even the nice old Vicar would. But would he? She considered the question of that the more closely, for she saw him coming towards her.

He was a tall man, lean and long of limb, and he walked with a stoop and a curious, shambling gait. But his face was humane;

more, it was human, greatly human. He had learnt his humanity in a hard school, having been the overworked incumbent of an East End parish before being relegated—it was practically a relegation, a benevolent relegation—to his present country living, an easy backwater where he could be simple in public and scholarly in private.

“Good morning, Miss Mangersbury. It still keeps fine, still keeps fine, doesn’t it? We shall have to pray for rain, pray for rain, if the farmers are to be satisfied.”

He spoke with his strange and somewhat irritating habit of doubling certain phrases in his sentences. It occasionally made his sermons intolerable to strangers who were not accustomed to his mannerism, but to his flock it had ceased to matter, for they loved him, and for many more reasons than one.

Miss Mangersbury made but perfunctory reply, endeavouring the while to sift within herself the arguments for and against telling the Rev. Mr. Knaresby about what so entirely filled her thoughts. She could not, however, make up her mind, and the Vicar was rambling on.

“A sad case, a sad case,” he was saying. “In the midst of life we are not only in death, but in death-in-life, in death-in-life, and that is worse. It is easier, despite Shakespeare, despite Shakespeare, to go to those ills we know not of than to bear those ills we have.”

Miss Mangersbury signified neither assent nor dissent; she was still too deeply pondering her doubt as to whether she should or should not tell him her plans, for his words, to do more than enter her subconsciousness; there, however, surely and irretrievably, they lodged.

“Alas, a very sad case, indeed. And a matter of fifty pounds, fifty pounds, Dr. Jones says, would save her. But how can a poor village girl raise fifty pounds to go to a Swiss sanatorium, to a Swiss sanatorium? Dr. Jones says—but it doesn’t matter what he says—she can’t go, she can’t go. That’s where poverty makes villains of us all. Even I am tempted to steal, tempted to steal—to save a poor girl’s life. Such a sweet, uncomplaining soul! Poor thing, poor thing! In three months she’ll probably be dead—for the lack of fifty pounds, fifty pounds.” He shook his head and sighed.

“Perhaps Miss Lawson——” began Miss Mangersbury.

“Miss Lawson, Miss Lawson? No good;

I’ve tried her. She’d spend a hundred on a specialist for her prize poodle if he were ill, but not a penny on a fellow human being. There are many like her, many like her, more shame to ’em.” He spoke with a righteous wrath, and the hurt pride of a lost battle clouded his eye.

Again Miss Mangersbury signified neither assent nor dissent. But her doubt existed now no longer; she had very definitely decided to tell the Vicar nothing at all.

“Well, I mustn’t keep you, mustn’t keep you, Miss Mangersbury. You ladies are always busy, always busy; if it isn’t shopping it’s needlework, and if it isn’t needlework it’s something equally beyond the comprehension of a mere man. Good morning, good morning.”

He raised his hat and shambled away.

Miss Mangersbury proceeded to the village. She made her few purchases, and then went to the post office. As she entered, she felt her heart miss a beat. She was taking the first step towards the great event. She waited her turn impatiently, then handed over the counter to the postmistress her post office savings book and a warrant to withdraw fifty pounds.

## II.

SHE found London very changed. The London of the ’nineties, which she had known so well, had suffered so many of its once familiar landmarks to be removed that she was a little bewildered, though she would not admit it. Even the hotel to which she had driven on her arrival—but in a taxi and not a four-wheeler—was notably altered. It had been fashionable when she had stayed there before, nearly thirty years ago; it was now scarcely more than a family boarding-house. But it was still comfortable, and she felt, while she put on an evening dress (which she had made for herself, secretly and with infinite care, after “the latest style” as given in a fashion paper), at home in her surroundings and at one with her own personality. The latter was the great thing; it meant as much to this greying, old-fashioned spinster of fifty-three as it means to every woman, from the *ingénue* of nineteen to the grass-widow of uncertain age.

She ate her dinner in reminiscent silence, alone at a small table near the window. She had little appetite; she was too excited to eat more than the barest obligatory amount. The great time had actually begun.

She did not know it—nobody who saw her dining quietly there by herself knew it—but, in very truth, she was a pathetic, even a tragic, figure. And yet she was there to enjoy herself, solely to enjoy herself.

The person who is dominated by a great aim, and who subordinates to it every other consideration in life, is, even when the aim itself is on an infinitely lower scale, of the pattern psychologically of Napoleon and Goethe. The ambition is not always, in the words of the latter genius, "to raise the pyramid of one's existence as high as possible"; it is sometimes a question of a much smaller exaltation than that, yet still of the same character—a domestic height of felicity, an adequate competency, the unique possession of one individual's love, the attainment, though but for a limited period, of one overwhelming, if relatively unimportant, desire. It was the last which was the dominating idea of Miss Maugersbury, and she had devoted herself to it with as much obstinate persistence as the immortals of history or of art devote themselves to the fulfilment of their destinies. Yet her ambition, patiently fostered, with all its steps deliberately foreseen and prepared, had been merely to spend one week in London, after the long exile of humiliating poverty, as a fashionable and wealthy woman, to be once again, for a fleeting seven days, what she had been before her world, on her father's sudden ruin and suicide, had crumbled beneath her feet. To that end she had scanted herself for years, gradually accumulating, with bitter saving, but grim determination, with much difficulty, too, the necessary funds for the purpose. And now she was in Town at last, with fifty pounds in her purse—and she meant to spend every penny of that sum—and with her wonderful week before her.

She finished her dinner, put on her cloak, which was the sole relic of bygone glory, and which had been carefully laid away against the great moment—she had been obliged to renovate it, but it had stood the process—and ordered a taxi. She then drove to the theatre which housed the latest success. Nothing but the latest success would satisfy her mood. She secured a stall. True to her reading of her part—though she did not realise that she was playing a part—she deliberately contrived to be late, wondering, as she pushed along the disturbed row in the semi-darkness, whether anyone was curious as to who she was, arriving alone, well-dressed and obviously a

patrician. Suddenly, as she settled into her seat, she laughed to herself. How absurd to think that anyone, with the lights down, would have noticed either how she was dressed or how she carried herself! She would have to wait until the first interval for that.

The play puzzled her. It was, in truth, very modern. Strangely enough, her first real disillusionment lay in the fact that the slang of the day was so alien to her. She simply did not understand it as the rest of the audience evidently understood it. And the types represented on the stage were alien to her, too—alien to the world she had known. The lowering of the curtain upon the close of the first act left her uncomfortably bewildered.

Now that the lights were up, she glanced about her. No, her clothes were not out of date, thanks to the fashion-book whose instructions she had so diligently and so accurately obeyed. She felt relieved on that point at least. On the other hand, she noticed a sharp difference in the attitude of the audience to what it had been in her younger days; theatre-going had apparently become less of a social event. Perhaps it might be otherwise on a first night, she reflected, but, as to that, she had no means of judging. But she found the audience on that night—yes, that was the only expression for it—more democratic in character. Nobody noticed anybody; everybody was content with his, or her, own valuation of social distinctions. She herself felt wholly out of the picture; not a soul wondered who she was or was even aware of her presence.

Of course she had a foolish and exaggerated estimation of her own importance, else such thoughts would not have crossed her mind. She was an egotist, let it be granted; but she had intensely brooded upon all this for so many years, and such long and intense brooding brings in its train a morbidity of outlook, and a consequent over-heightening of the personal equation which is really more pitiable than ridiculous. Often of such stuff tragedy is made—and nearly always disillusion.

The second act and the second interval and the third act passed without further influence over her thoughts. Once or twice she drew her cloak closer about her as though she were momentarily chilled, but she dropped it again from her shoulders each time quite soon. But the third interval was productive of something that





"It was high up, and she could see out over a forest of metropolitan chimney-pots."

perhaps was, in reality, direct from the hand of Fate.

### III.

"How is Muriel Chipperfield — Muriel Pentaddon that was? I haven't heard anything about her for ages," she heard a woman's voice say behind her, soon after the lights had gone up.

"Oh, my dear, she's been so ill. Didn't you know?" answered another feminine voice.

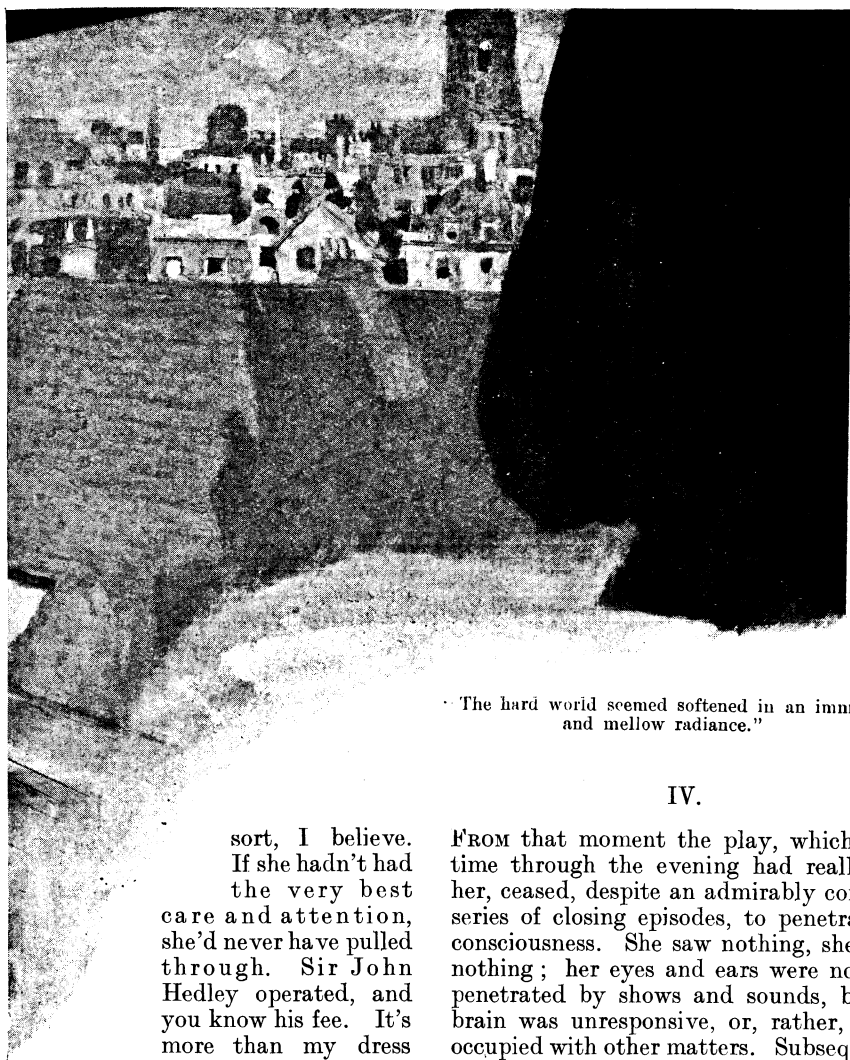
"Ill? No, I haven't heard a word. As

a matter of fact, I haven't really seen anything of her since her marriage. It isn't as if we had ever been very close friends, and you know how one can drop out of a girl's life when she marries. But I always thought her rather a dear—a little stuck-up, though."

"She's not a bit so, really, when you know her."

"What's been the matter with her?"

"She's had an awful time. She had to have a terrible operation—an ulcer of some



The hard world seemed softened in an immense and mellow radiance."

#### IV.

sort, I believe. If she hadn't had the very best care and attention, she'd never have pulled through. Sir John Hedley operated, and you know his fee. It's more than my dress allowance for two years rolled into one. And since then she's been in a nursing home for I don't know how long, and is only just able now to go to the South of France to pick up her strength."

"I am so sorry to hear about it. Remember me to her when you write next."

"Yes, I will."

"How lucky to have a husband who could afford to give her the best possible treatment and spare no expense, and afterwards take her to the South of France!"

"Yes. A poor girl would most probably have died."

The lights suddenly lowered, and the conversation ceased as the curtain rose swiftly on the fourth and last act.

FROM that moment the play, which at no time through the evening had really held her, ceased, despite an admirably contrived series of closing episodes, to penetrate her consciousness. She saw nothing, she heard nothing; her eyes and ears were normally penetrated by shows and sounds, but her brain was unresponsive, or, rather, it was occupied with other matters. Subsequently, however, she was surprised to find how much of that last act she could recall. Her subconsciousness, at any rate, had not been busy elsewhere.

She remembered once having climbed a church tower that possessed an immense ancient bell, and, just as she had been crossing the belfry chamber towards the further stairs, this bell had begun to swing and to mouth forth the hour of noon. The whole tower had throbbed with the sound, terrifyingly, and she had emerged on to the leads above shaken and stunned. And for hours afterwards the fearful clang of that huge bell had echoed and re-echoed through her whole being. So now through her whole being there echoed and re-echoed a voice—a voice which kept saying, "A poor girl would most probably have died." She heard it through the final

applause ; she heard it as she passed through the foyer on her way out ; she heard it inside the taxi which took her back to her hotel ; she heard it as she slowly undressed and got into bed. She heard it there, too, and could not sleep for it.

If it is difficult to forego a habit of a lifetime, how much more difficult it is to forego a desire of a lifetime ! She turned from side to side continually, wooing oblivion of her problem. But she was forced to recognise that it had her in its grip, and that it would not let her go until she had consented to the only solution possible to a real woman. Yet she fought against it, and fought hard, as the flesh always will fight against the spirit.

The human conscience is a delicate instrument and one, as it were, mathematically exact, but, unlike even the most delicate instrument of mortal devising, it can oscillate and delude. The end may be a foregone conclusion, like that of any mathematical theorem, but the means waver, hesitate and go astray. Yet, however incorrect and unstable the working, the result is accurate and fixed ; and, as in so many things of great moment, it is not so much the final achievement that it is profitable to study as the progressive achieving. So was it here ; a battle of the first magnitude was fought, and fought to a finish, under the narrow arch of this woman's small skull.

The first hour passed, and the second, and half of the third. She got up, put on her cloak—she had no dressing-gown—and sat at the window. It was high up, and she could see out over a forest of metropolitan chimney-pots to which the serene light from a full moon lent a magic which, if immeasurably fantastic, was also immeasurably beautiful. The hard world seemed softened in an immense and mellow radiance.

It was given her to remember much—her rather flamboyant father ; her mother, whom she had scarcely known ; her early and idle life ; her one lover, if he could be indeed considered in the light of a lover ; the family catastrophe ; her burial in the country ; her poverty and pinching ; her one lifelong and ardent ambition. She grew rebellious as she thought of the last and of the hard-won moment of triumph. Was she, after all those patient and terrible years of struggle towards its attainment, to have to give it up ? She knew it could never, by any possibility, come to her again.

It was a bitter thing to have to do, to give

up her great week—and for whom ? For a girl she hardly knew by sight and in whom she had no personal interest whatever. “ But,” she reflected, as her glance strayed to a church steeple silhouetted momentarily against a moon-brilliant patch of sailing cloud, “ actions that give us pleasure to perform, because they are pleasing to ourselves to do them, are of little value either to ourselves or even to those we seek to benefit. Is any charity acceptable to Heaven unless it is disinterested—the charity of pity and pure humanity ? ”

With that thought, although she did not know it, this poor, unremarkable and rather drably-tempered spinster became a philosopher. She had pierced into the truth as seen by greater spirits than herself.

She got into bed again, and heard a church clock strike as she did so. It was the first chime of which she had been conscious ; that in itself was a psychological sign. Towards dawn she fell into an uneasy doze ; dreams surged fitfully and heavily through her mind ; always she awoke with a start, had a moment's blissful isolation from her problem, then knew it for all it was, and more intensely with each time of realisation.

A troubled soul can no more prevent the recurrence of its discord than the sea can prevent the recurrence of its waves up the beach. In the one case it is the moon's affair ; in the other it may be God's.

The battle was over by morning. She dressed, ate a good breakfast—characteristically she determined to have her full money's worth !—paid her bill, packed—ah, with what an aching heart !—and caught the first train home.

## V.

LET her be forgiven the manner of the sequel ; even a cleansed vessel will keep a stain.

She made up, from her small store, the few pounds she had spent out of her fifty, and took that whole sum to the Vicar.

“ I was staying the week-end,” she said to him, “ with my cousin, Lady Marchester ”—she had no cousin and there was no Lady Marchester—“ and I happened to mention about that poor girl, and—well, *noblesse oblige*, you know—and here are the fifty pounds she has sent you—anonously, quite anonously, please. We both insist upon that. Our family has never liked to appear in subscription lists.”

Her family ! She only belonged to the great family of us all.

# WHEN THINGS GO WRONG IN GOLF

By BERT SEYMOUR

*Winner of "The News of the World" Tournament, 1921, the Croydon and District Professional Alliance Cup, 1920, and the Essex Championship Cup, 1922*

*(In a chat with Clyde Foster)*

THE generality of golfers, professional or amateur, scratch or long-handicap men, are all too familiar with periods when everything goes wrong, or, as the saying runs, they can do nothing right. Stand at the door of any club-house at a week-end as the players come in from a competitive round. You will be sure to hear many of them say that they "could not hit a ball to-day."

Some of them will be seen at the earliest opportunity taking the professional out to put them on their game again. They have forgotten something, and require his practised eye to discover what their trouble is. As likely as not, in the changed circumstances, with no competition in progress, the professional will be obliged to confess that he can see nothing the matter. The golfer is then thrown back on himself to find out why he played so badly when he wanted to play so well.

The number of contributive causes that make things go wrong at golf are legion.

## PREOCCUPATION OR NERVES.

Before speaking of wrongly-played shots by a golfer who plays them correctly nine times in ten, I should like to get at the reason for these errors, and I think some part of the blame lies in the player himself or herself. The mind may be wandering through preoccupation or a nervous condition, which throws one's game out of gear. That terrible word "temperament" forces itself in here, more's the pity, because I think if there had been less said and written about temperament, fewer golfers would be suffering from its tricks to-day.

I never like to talk about temperament, and almost feel like "touching wood"

when I do, in case the thought of it should worry me in some big competition. I think we had better dismiss "temperament" at once as a bogey that only grows bigger and blacker when notice is taken of it. It is much better for a golfer to convince himself that he is able at any time to command the comfortable, placid mood that makes for good golf. Don't try too much, in case you pay for your ambition by accomplishing all the less.

## "PLAYING ONESELF IN."

When a golfer is off his game, or feels like going off his game, it is best to start easily and gradually play himself in. He should not be turned from his purpose by the fact that his opponent in a match or partner in a stroke competition goes ahead of him for the first hole or two.

A round of golf is a two hours' journey, and although there is never any time to waste, it is still true that there is time enough to improve your form as the round proceeds. We are differently constituted, and, speaking for myself, I experience the greatest possible difficulty in practising what I am now preaching. When I start a round badly I do not, as a rule, finish well; and when I start well, I seldom finish badly. Golf is the business of my life, but, like other professionals, I am frequently overtaken by those ordinary human frailties that bother other people.

## THE EFFECT OF SPECTATORS.

There is, however, in my case a peculiarity that may present a contrast to your own. The majority of golfers—I am speaking of the great body of amateurs—are liable to be put off at the beginning of a game, or at

any stage of it, when spectators stand near watching their shots.

Personally, I play best with a crowd looking on, though this is a condition which one must play well to bring about. If, for example, during a big tournament or competition, a professional should have the good fortune to do a phenomenal first round, he will find himself drawing a crowd for his second round, and it will be all the better for him, if, like me, he plays better in these circumstances. But, on the other hand, it will be all the worse for him if a large assembly of spectators tends to put him off. So far as I am concerned—and there may be others like me—I feel sure that my first round in any great event would be strokes better with a crowd at my heels. I should then be less in danger of going off my game than in the comparative loneliness of playing with my partner and our caddies as the only spectators. Perhaps there is something of the showman about me, but, whether or no, what I am telling you is true.

#### THE VALUE OF EXPERIENCE.

Experience in competitions is a great education, as many first-rate golfers will tell you when they put up a poor performance on great occasions.

What is true of professionals is still more applicable to the ordinary run of golfers. I could name men with handicaps of five or six who play remarkably good golf, well up to their handicaps, in ordinary club competitions, but who, as soon as they attempt higher flights away from their own courses, become the victims of disconcerting self-consciousness. They play every shot in fear and trembling, and are never so happy as when it is all over. I have even been requested to withdraw my presence from highly-strung players of this description during an important match.

#### CONCENTRATION OVERCOMES NERVES.

A cure for this form of mental disability is to rivet the mind on each shot, thinking out carefully how it should be played, leaving no room for distracting reflections. I cannot think of a surer means of overcoming nervousness than concentrating on the game in this way.

Suppose you go up to a shot which strikes you at a glance as being difficult and dangerous, the right thing to do is to go for it with a dash of assurance. It is almost certain then that you will astonish

yourself by the success of your effort. But if you dwell on the difficulty and fiddle about in your bag for the right club with which to perform the shot, perhaps taking out one or two and then putting them back for another, all the odds are against your last choice being as good as your first.

#### INDECISION FATAL TO GOOD GOLF.

Experience has taught me that first impressions are best in golf, if only because the element of uncertainty has not been allowed to arise in the mind, as it does when you chop and change about for the right club.

George Duncan is a man of very quick decision. Scarcely ever does he develop symptoms of a divided mind. I am well aware Duncan is a law unto himself, but I put it forward to golfers generally that his example is worth consideration.

Recently at St. Anns, during *The Daily Mail* £1,000 Competition, I debated with myself every time I came to a certain hole whether the club to use was a brassie or a mid-iron. All the time I felt that the iron would serve me best, but as I saw other competitors taking wood, I had not the courage of my convictions, and so on three occasions I drove into rough ground over the green. On the fourth occasion I told myself, and told the marker, too, that the iron was the club I ought to have used all along. He doubted it till I proved I was right by landing my iron shot on the green and getting a two at a bogey four.

#### SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-RELIANCE.

Now, that was a sense in which things had gone wrong with me for lack of self-reliance. The same thing has happened to you on many occasions, and therefore I advise you to cultivate confidence in your own judgment. After all, it is you who are playing the shot, and you ought to be sufficiently familiar with your own abilities to do what you think best, regardless of what others are doing. Sandy Herd frequently takes a spoon where other players take an iron.

The strong point about the veteran's golf has always been this knowledge of himself. Herd would as soon interfere with a selection of a club made by a fellow-competitor as allow his own selection to be influenced by the example of another.

There is no greater quality in your golf or mine—and I wish I had more of it—than this detached attitude of mind which

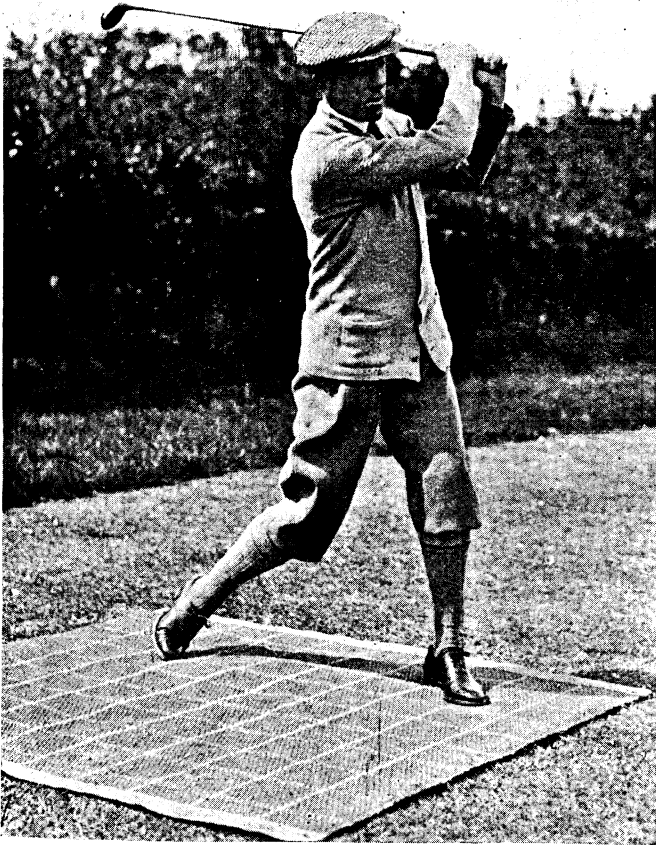


Photo by]

BERT SEYMOUR DRIVING.

[P. G. Luck.

*The almost completed finish. The left foot has turned slightly outwards, indicating the direction of the flight of the ball.*

enables a golfer to play the game that suits him best. You may indulge a little in imitation of some other person's style in practice, but when it comes to playing a match or taking part in a tournament, absolutely everything must be ignored except your own game.

#### A SERIOUS MIND.

Golf, as played by most amateurs, is a very sociable game. The round is interspersed with jokes, japes, and laughter as it proceeds. I do not advocate dour golf, but I still think it is best to refrain from much of this sort of interchange of humour, and to derive the pleasure of the game from the playing of it.

I fancy most golfers would play much

better rounds if they paid more attention to their shots, and I am sure nothing gives a golfer greater satisfaction than to beat all his previous performances by playing a really good game. There is as much joy in returning a good card, say, in a monthly competition, as there is chagrin in tearing up one's card half-way round.

#### EFFECTS OF SUGGESTION.

I remember playing in a knock-out competition against a good old professional, who reminded me, as we walked to the first tee, that he had sometimes seen me play pretty badly, and that he was not without hopes of beating me. While thinking of what he had said, and letting it rather haunt me, I lost the first hole. He then said that it looked as if I was going to play a bad round this time. Several holes had been played, when it dawned on me that this sort of banter was doing my golf no good; but for the life of me I could not shake off the effects of it, and when eventually he beat me by one up, the old professional apologised for what he had said, and hoped, if you

please, that he had not put me off my game.

Of course I could not blame him, as he spoke only in perfect good nature, knowing that I should have backed myself to beat him three times in five at least. It was foolish of me to let his remark take such a hold on me. We learn by experience, and I think I have been a wiser man since that day.

#### TRAINING FOR COMPETITIONS.

I have known players suddenly alter all their habits for a week or two before a competition, and I have seen them play very timidly when the time came. For my part, I like to go on in my usual way, taking some care, of course, that my usual

way has nothing seriously the matter with it.

If, for example, I were suddenly to stop smoking, or to give up my customary glass of beer to my dinner, I fail to see that I should golf any better for the sacrifice—indeed, I am afraid things would go wrong with me. Every sensible person knows that one who wants to play golf well should keep fit.

#### DON'T WORRY.

The ordinary golfer should avoid over-anxiety and *play the game* instead of worrying over it. One reason why young golfers come on so quickly—besides the fact that they are young—is that they do not fret in the least, but rather laugh, at a bad shot, knowing that it was only an accident

which they are not likely to let happen again.

Fidgeting on the tee, until you create a state of uncertainty as to your stance, is a very fruitful source of things going wrong. By all means make sure that you are quite ready before making a start, but try to arrive at this conclusion without much ado. Go quietly up to your ball, take up a natural position, and hit in the belief that the shot will be a good one. Above all, don't vex yourself with a multitude of fears.

If you will think over a shot, think you can play it; don't ever think that you may fizzle it. For once that things go wrong when you believe that they will go right, ten times will they go wrong when you deliberate doubtfully on the issue. Doubters are duffers—at golf.



### IN WINTER-TIME.

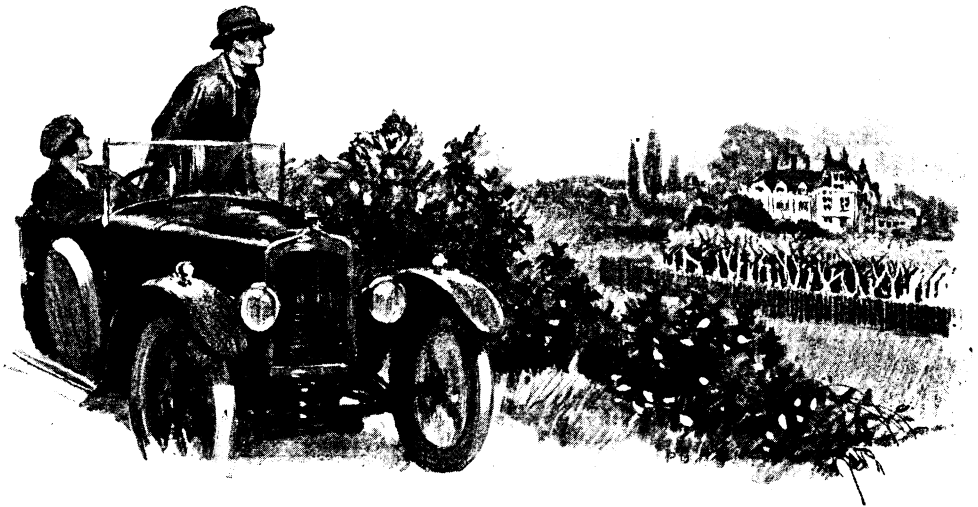
**T**HERE comes a hush, a stillness now,  
Save for a small red-breasted bird  
Who sits upon the naked bough  
And makes his sweet insistence heard.

Again has my rare Summer gone  
With shining others swiftly by,  
And what have I to think upon  
Under the grey and Winter sky?

The husbandman has reaped his corn;  
The swallow's brood has taken wing;  
I, only I, of creatures born  
Am desperate of my harvesting.

Oh, little minstrel, you who make  
Such wistful measures, go your ways,  
Lest at the last my heart should break  
For all my lost and golden days!

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.



"‘It *does* look well now, doesn’t it?’ No doubt it did, if you preferred a regiment of six hundred scientifically trained and disinfected fruit trees to a place of beauty, freedom—and memories ”

# DREAM’S END

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

ANYONE voyaging much between Colombo and home could have introduced you to Consuelo Severn, could have—and probably would have—told you all about her; possibly might have warned you, with the best intentions, that the longest eyelashes and the most irresistibly charming laugh in the world belonged to as heartless and frivolous a coquette as you were likely to have encountered.

Garry Thirsk received both the information and the warning before he’d been aboard the P. & O. twelve hours, all because he had chanced to look up when Consuelo, who was talking to a severe-looking lady near by, had laughed. The laugh was Consuelo’s own, distinct and individual, possessed of such an elfin quality of charm that the severe lady actually smiled with more genuine sympathy than she had evinced for a month, and Garry Thirsk looked up involuntarily to discover the owner of the laugh.

Thus came Major Sherwin’s opportunity for instructing Garry—who had been on an expedition involving two years without the sight of a white woman—on the subject of Consuelo Sever. She was very charming.

Everyone, the Major said grimly, admitted that, and there was always someone fresh to admit it, since Miss Severn journeyed more or less regularly between her elder brother’s house in Ceylon and her younger brother’s in England.

It was quite plain that Garry Thirsk was already willing to admit it, on the evidence of that echo of laughter, with enthusiasm. And the Major, who liked Garry exceedingly, didn’t intend that he should go the way of young Anthony Raikes, or of Captain Majendie, or of the P. & O.’s first officer. So he sank his chivalry towards women in what he considered his duty to the boy, and pointed out that Consuelo Severn was a Frivolous, Shallow, and Insincere little Butterfly—all with capitals—while Garry Thirsk was observing the exquisite sweep of her dark lashes against the delicate colouring of her small face.

Garry Thirsk received the information with polite indifference and perhaps some secret amusement. The Major did not know of Lois Carew, away in Somerset. If he had, he would doubtless have approved of her. Certainly he couldn’t have called her a butterfly, for Lois Carew was Common-



sense, Capability, and Directness personified. She looked out of the photograph that Garry Thirsk carried in his pocket-book with a large, friendly smile, just as she had looked when she had said good-bye to him five years ago, assuring him, with a cheerful absence of sentimentality, that she'd do her very best with Tony and with the place while he was away. He was sure that she would. In no one else's charge could he so readily have left either Tony or "the place," both the legacy of his elder brother's tragic death—the great old Thirsk country house and the small new son of it. Tony had been three years old; the house was nearly three hundred. Garry Thirsk had been faced by the problem that he couldn't do his duty to either by throwing up his own job. That was where Lois Carew stepped in, capable, unsentimental, practical and kind. She would take charge of both during the five years he was away.

Garry Thirsk fell at her feet in gratitude—metaphorically, of course. Actually he said: "You're a brick, Lois." He'd known her all their lives, and of course would marry her one day.

Of all which Major Sherwin, talking of Consuelo Severn, was quite unaware. And Garry Thirsk didn't trouble to enlighten him. He dismissed the gallant Major as an amusing old meddler—and someone else, an hour later, introduced him to Consuelo Severn.

He talked to her all that evening, a magic evening of tropic moonlight. He told her about Tony and "the place," and got enthusiastic. He saw the laughter flicker into her eyes.

"The Englishman going home," she mocked. "England, home, and——"

"I suppose I'm boring you," said Garry rather stiffly.

"Oh, no, you're not. I love hearing about it. Please go on."

And she said it with such absolute conviction, and put out a slim hand as if to arrest his unconscious movement of departure with so charming an impulse, that he went on.

"You see, Bryan left 'em both to me," he told her gravely. "He was awfully keen on the place, and was looking forward to living down there when the War was over. He came all through from 1914 without a scratch, and was killed the day before the Armistice." He paused, then added slowly: "I know he wanted Tony to—to grow up there. The old place—it meant so much to him."

"To you both," corrected Consuelo gently. He looked at her.

"Yes." He wondered how she knew. "You see, it's been the same ever since we could remember, and—and years before that. Everything about the place makes you feel that directly you see it—the doorway that you hit your head on if you're much over five feet four, and the courtyard in front with a pump in it, close to the chief entrance, and the twisty stairs, and—oh, all the things that I suppose are really out of date and inconvenient. And the orchard's frightfully old and always full of birds. . . ." He broke off suddenly, awkwardly, remembering her mockery. She was looking at him, her chin on her hand and her elbow on the cane chair-arm. She smiled.

"I hope that Tony will learn to love it as much as you do."

There was no mockery there. He said quite simply and involuntarily, "I wish you could see it," and then, remembering that he had not told her where "the old place" was, repaired the omission, adding: "Didn't you say you knew the West Country—Somerset?"

"Yes," she said. She sat very still. "I stayed there eighteen months ago."

But she did not express even a conventional acknowledgment of his wish, and Garry, conscious of the omission, got out his pocket-book with photographs of "the old place" and Tony, taken five years ago. In the other flap of the pocket-book, all by itself, was the photo of Lois Carew. He did not show her that, and the reason was not that he did not want to, but simply that it never occurred to him. For what occurred to him then, banishing everything else, was the charm of the face bent over the photographs, the charm of the voice that proclaimed so warm and candid an admiration that Garry, remembering the Major's indictments, was hotly desirous of telling that well-meaning individual exactly what he thought of him, and he did not even want to convey the information only in words.

Consuelo Severn handed the photographs back, and over them Garry looked straight into her eyes. He did not say anything, neither did she, but there are pages turned in silence.

\* \* \* \* \*

With every hour of the liner's homeward journey it seemed those two themes were woven together in Garry's consciousness—his return to "the old place" and the

charm of Consuelo Severn. He came to associate them, to think of them together until the spell of each—the familiar and the

and real, that surely proved Major Sherwin's theories wrong indeed.

And then there came that evening, the



"In the other flap of the pocket-book, all by itself, was the photo of Lois Carew. He did not show her that."

ever-new—intensified the other, for to all his enthusiasm Consuelo listened with an adorable sympathy, delicate, whimsical,

last before they were due at Plymouth. They were on deck together, enjoying the fresh tang of the up-Channel breeze, the

grey and silver of a misty April evening after the flaming splendours of tropic sunsets.

"Less than twenty-four hours now," Consuelo said, glancing with a little laugh that somehow rang strangely to him, "and we'll go our ways. It's been a jolly voyage, hasn't it?"

"Consuelo!"

Apparently she did not hear him. She went on, still in that little, careless voice: "And it's been so nice of you to tell me all about that funny old place of yours. When I'm in Town I shall think of you down in Devon—it is Devon, isn't it? But of course you'll be awfully busy making it all up to date and fit to live in—won't you?—since you really mean to live in the back of beyond!"

He stared at her. It was as if she had suddenly lifted a mask—the mask by which he had come to know her these halcyon days at sea—and shown him the face of the real Consuelo that others knew so well, who for the sake of a fresh conquest—hadn't the Major said cynically that her average was two a voyage?—could deliberately feign the sympathy and understanding in which he had been fool enough to believe.

She did not look at him now, but out at the delicate grey and lavender and faint primrose of the sea and sky, as if the calm finality of the blow she dealt were a familiar thing—almost as if she were in the habit of counting ten after she had dealt it.

"You know, I'm going to stay with the Van Delgens, before I go to my brother's, in Berkshire."

"Yes," said Garry gravely. But he must have meant it merely as a polite acknowledgment, for he had *not* known. He knew the Van Delgens well enough by repute—who indeed did not?—blatantly wealthy, blatantly advertised by their possessions, prominent among which was their Berkshire house, beloved of the illustrated press. Cecil Van Delgen, son of the house, and his sister had joined the P. & O. at Port Said. Cecil Van Delgen and Consuelo Severn!

She was smiling, a new smile belonging to a new Consuelo, the Consuelo behind the mask. A tag of verse read long ago beat in Garry's brain—

Most friendship is feigning,  
Most loving mere folly.

That evening Consuelo sang song after song to an appreciative audience in the music-room. Garry Thirsk sat on deck and

bit the stem of a burnt-out pipe, and thought very hard of Lois Carew.

\* \* \* \* \*

She met him at the little station with a small trim two-seater. He did not see her at first because he was looking for the dog-cart and old Punch. He was looking forward to seeing old Punch again, the pal who had given him so many good days with the hounds when they'd both been much younger, and who had been pensioned off to occasional light station work just before he left.

"He was getting old, and not very much use. I sold him for you," Lois explained. "This is ever so much more convenient; we shall be there in no time."

She drove with the capability and skill which she brought to everything she did; trim, competent, and brisk, she looked "just right." But Garry frowned.

"Who bought him?" he demanded abruptly.

"Punch? Oh, a man over at Taunton—I forget his name. He goes about with vegetables in a cart. I didn't get much, of course."

"You didn't tell me."

She looked at him in frank surprise. "Why, no! I didn't think of it. You gave me *carte blanche* with everything, didn't you? I told you I shouldn't bother you with any unimportant affairs. You had your work—"

"That's all right," he said hurriedly. It was, of course. He *had* given his *carte blanche*, knowing quite well he could rely on her good sense and business ability. But somehow Punch—

It was absurd how much the thing mattered, how it hurt to think of Punch in "a cart with vegetables." They swept past the white gate at which Punch could never be cured of shying, up the long hill for which he had so often flung gallantly into his collar.

"You'll find a change since you were here last," Lois was saying, and there was a satisfied ring in her voice. "Things have come on wonderfully—everyone says so."

He made no reply, conscious of an odd sense of apprehension he could not have explained. The car slid round the shoulder of the hill whence you got the first view of the old place.

"What's happened to 'em?" said Garry blankly.

Lois laughed. "The fruit trees? They

look well, don't they? I had that done the first year, and now they're bearing splendidly. There are six hundred there—all the best kinds. And the old stuff made firewood for months."

"But there used to be apples and pears," Garry said vaguely. He was staring at the expanse of bare earth, with its trim lines of whitewashed young fruit trees like a regiment of white-trousered soldiers, and thinking dully of the orchard he had pictured, the orchard he'd known since he was a small boy, the orchard he'd described to Consuelo Severn, with its deep green grasses that would now have been laced with foamy cow parsley and the delicate cuckoo flowers, with its chequering sunlight and shadow and its birds' song—it was the most wonderful haunt for birds.

He heard Lois saying something about moss and small-sized fruit.

"Quite a lot of it was only fit for cider. The trees were much too old to be pruned, and they only harboured birds which did a lot of damage. It *does* look well now, doesn't it?"

No doubt it did, if you preferred a regiment of six hundred scientifically trained and disinfected fruit trees to a place of beauty, freedom—and memories. Before Garry could reply they had reached the gateway and were humming up the drive.

The drive was new. In the old days a grass-grown lane had led to the stables, and a long flagged walk between tangled flower borders from the wicket gate in the hedge to that door unintended for persons over five feet four. Now you could drive to the doorstep itself, and had you been seven feet tall you would not have hit your head.

The improvements, of which the orchard had been the first, followed one another in bewildering succession, and Garry was shown them all during the ensuing hours. Gone were the inconvenient intricacies of architecture which had been tolerable by right of association, but gone, too, was something else—something that could only be defined as the soul of the house. Lois Carew and a skilled and practical architect had given him a fine and excellent dwelling, but they had taken away his home. Instinctively he turned to the door of his "den." Here at least would be something familiar.

"Oh, you needn't have that poky little room any more," said Lois' voice behind him. "That does quite well for a store-room. I've had a room fitted up specially

for your use on the other side of the house. I think you'll like it."

He followed her in silence, and found a big, orderly room conforming with the rest of the house, and as unlike as possible the shabby, delightful place of boyish memories that he had shared with Bryan long ago. Left alone there, at the end of that sorry pilgrimage, he stood at the window, looking grimly at the well-kept garden, and felt an alien in his own inheritance.

Tony, a sturdy and solemn youngster of seven, had accepted his uncle with a ready friendliness that might have been Bryan's own. But Garry, who all those five years had been unconsciously looking forward to talking of Bryan to Bryan's son, found that tradition, at least, had not been included in Tony's short life at all. Apparently Lois had not thought it necessary that Tony should be imbued with that spirit of the old place which had meant so much to his father, and Garry could never make good the omission, for the "old place" was gone.

It was the second disillusioning in twenty-four hours, and all the more bitter because it was in some intangible way connected with the first—and Consuelo Severn. Only the irony of it all was that whereas Consuelo Severn had deliberately amused herself with him, Lois Carew had acted throughout with the best intentions.

He faced her at dinner that evening across a perfectly appointed table, and wondered dully at his own replies to the flood of conversation poured upon him by the cousin who was chaperoning Lois Carew. Hadn't dear Lois done wonders with the place—absolute wonders?

Garry admitted with bitter honesty that she had.

Lois looked at him with the large and friendly smile of the photograph, gratified at the appreciation she knew was due to her, utterly oblivious to the fact of anything being wrong.

"And now," said the elder lady cheerfully, "I suppose Garry will settle down."

Garry was conscious that the remark was in the nature of a gage, natural enough as it was.

"*Settle down,*" in this strange new place! He knew it would be impossible, as impossible as the idea of marriage with Lois Carew.

And then across the flowers and lights he met her blue eyes fixed on his face with an odd intuition. "Oh, no, Janie, he won't," she said placidly. "He's not cut out for the

*rôle* of country gentleman." Well, since she knew. . . .

The echo of Consuelo's mocking voice rang in his brain: "The Englishman—going home."

Lois laughed, still placidly. "I expect there was someone—on the boat," she said.

His tanned face reddened darkly, chance shot though he knew it to be. Somehow he hated the fate that linked those two themes together—the charm of the "old place" and the charm of Consuelo Severn—as much as he once had welcomed it, for both were dead.

That night moonlight made little prim ghosts of the orchard trees while Garry wrote letters. He couldn't stay here. He'd take Tony and go back abroad, and Lois could live on in the place she had "made." Probably she'd marry.

He finished the letters at three o'clock; at seven he was across the hill that hid the "old place" from view, steering his course more from habit than anything else.

He met her some four miles distant, walking as swiftly as he himself, and with the same determination. Of the two, she was by far the less surprised.

She said simply, "I came out early because I couldn't sleep," and looked at him with big grave eyes fringed with those incredible lashes.

Garry said: "You were going to the Van Delgens' in Berkshire."

"I didn't go. I found an excuse. I came home to my brother's."

"But—"

"He bought a house near here two years ago. I stayed there last time I was in England. So, you see, I knew—the—your home quite well."

"You never told me."

"You never asked me. You didn't even tell me where the—the old place was at first, and then, when I realised—" Suddenly her voice shook.

"And then?" Garry was looking at her very hard.

"You see, I knew that you would find it—different, and I knew that it would mean a lot to you. But I couldn't tell you, somehow. You know, you'd never spoken to me of Lois Carew."

Upon which followed a long silence. Then Garry said slowly. "Why did you care to hear about it all at first, and then, on that last evening—"

"Because"—the colour came into her face and left it as swiftly—"because I overheard someone talking of—of us. And after that—oh, I just wanted to hurt you, I think."

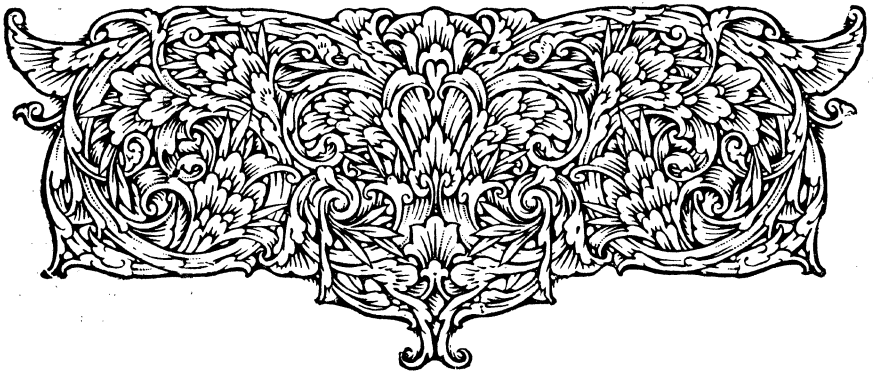
"Consuelo!" He took a step towards her, then stood back. "What—did you hear?" he demanded curtly.

"That—that perhaps you were flirting with me as I deserved." She said it in an odd, detached little voice, as if she were speaking of someone else.

"I am glad they said 'perhaps,'" Garry told her quietly. "But, since you believed that, I wonder you came here, after all."

She lifted her head and gave him a long, straight look. "I came because I had to. I hated to think of your finding everything different, and if there could be anything I could do to—to make up—"

To which Garry Thirsk made no direct reply. For he knew then that whereas Lois Carew might possess the gift of a great ability in reconstruction, it was to the Frivolous, Shallow and Insincere little Butterfly that there belonged the greater power of setting right his whole world.





““You have been and gone and brought back the hat and given our best customer the bird!””

# THE GOLDEN PHEASANT

By FRED GILLETT

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

“**D**ID you finish Lady Turtlegreen’s hat, Eileen?”

“Yes, Mademoiselle.”

“Put it in the showroom. She is going to call for it to-day.”

Mademoiselle was not French. Her real name was Patricia Foyle. She called herself “Mademoiselle Adeline” because she kept a milliner’s shop. As everyone knows, milliners who are Maud and Gladys and Elizabeth in private life are “Heloise” and “Elaine” and “Isolde” to their customers. Their home-made British hats also become “Parisian,” for hats by any other name are not so *chic*.

Mademoiselle had not many customers now. Her shop window in Little Street offered the latest fashions to a workaday, unfashionable neighbourhood. Gone was that good time a few years ago, when mill-hands and ex-mothers’-helps were earning

six pounds a week and spending five on clothes. In those dazzling, jazzful days neither Solomon in all his glory nor the Queen of Sheba in all hers was ever arrayed like one of these toilers and spinners. Hats had boomed then at nineteen-and-eleven. Though they still bloomed at nine-and-eleven, and even blossomed at three-and-eleven, they wasted most of their sweetness on the desert stare of the mill-girls, who had reverted to the clogs and shawl economy of their mothers till such times as wages should soar again on high heels and osprey plumes.

Mademoiselle had retained one or two customers, however, who were hosts in themselves—Lady Turtlegreen, for instance. She bought hats at ten guineas. She was as difficult to please as a weathercock, and generally drove Mademoiselle and Eileen temporarily insane before she was satisfied.

But she paid well and promptly. Art must please Philistia or starve. Her latest hat, which she was expected to call for and pay for to-day, had had its component parts assembled, dissembled, and reassembled by the deft fingers of Art and Eileen seven times. Lady Turtlegreen was consistent. Her consistency consisted of this: if you put the bow or the bunch of grapes or the feather on the one side, she would be certain to want it on the other. The hat under present discussion was a triumph of the modiste's ingenuity. It had feathers on both sides, as well as front and back and on the top. You couldn't find an unfluffed spot on that hat. If there was any variation in its symmetry, the distinction was as delicate as the difference between the liver wing and gizzard wing of a humming-bird.

Eileen, the assistant, placed the chapeau-etical creation on the table in the room at the back of the shop, known as the show-room.

"I see somebody has been sending you presents, Mademoiselle," she said, on seeing a brace of pheasants on the table. "Are they from your country squire admirer again?"

"Don't be silly, Eileen. Can't Squire Barryton send me presents of pheasants without admiring me?"

"Did you read the label, M'selle?"

"I tried to, but it's in French."

"The label is a proposal of marriage, M'selle. It is a tie-on label love-letter. It says—

*"La faisan d'or  
Fais son nid dans le bois.  
Viens-toi avec moi?  
Si chante le voix  
Du Chantecler."*

"What does it all mean, Eileen? You know I can't read French. It looks like a menu card."

"I will translate it into Irish, Mademoiselle. It means, 'Sure ye're the very devil of an angel, darlint, and if ye haven't got a pair of wings at all, it's because your shoulders are swate enough without 'em, bedad!'"

"How dare Squire Barryton allude to my shoulders! Why, he hardly knows my name! He only knows me as Mademoiselle, and I only know him as the Squire. I thought he had better taste."

"Well, he doesn't exactly say that. Perhaps I've translated rather freely. But that's just the gist of his jest. He means you to read between the lines, I think."

"Translate it word for word, Eileen, or I'll give you a week's notice to leave on the spot."

"Well, word for word, he says you are a bird—a golden pheasant—and he wants you to fly away with him to the woods and build a nest. That, accompanied by the pheasants, is a very pretty flight of fancy. He is alluding, of course, to Rostand's play, because he signs himself Chanticleer. That is French for the chanticleered monarch of the glen, or the wattled herald of the dawn, who cockadoodledos to bid the sun rise on the maiden all forlorn."

"I know it doesn't mean all that, Eileen. You are romancing again to tease me. I shall tell Squire Barryton that if he has anything to crow about, he must say it in plain Irish. Now tell me what he really says, Eileen—not that I care twopence about his chaff."

"Well, what he really says is, 'Got anything on, this week-end? If not otherwise engaged, get engaged to a country squire, for he's a jolly good fellow.'"

"Eileen, you are hopelessly frivolous. Go to the kitchen and tell that domestic treasure, Rose of Killarney, to put the pheasants in the larder. And if you find the man who has come to mend the gas-stove flirting with her, ask him what he's doing, and if he says 'Nothing,' tell him not to. There seems to be an epidemic of flirtation among men just at this season."

"I hadn't noticed it myself," said Eileen. "Nobody makes love to me." On returning from the kitchen she said: "I think Rose must have rejected the gas-fitter's advances—if any. Anyhow, he had his head inside the gas oven, and there was a strong smell of gas, and he was whistling 'Tit-Willow.' He leaves a widowed mother."

"How do you know that, you reckless romancer?"

"Because Rose says that if you would like the pheasants plucked and dressed, the gas-fitter's widowed mother will be very pleased to do it for a shilling each. Will you have their feathers bobbed at a bob a nob?"

"Yes, tell Rose to give them to him when he's completed the gas escape. I'll give him the two shillings when he brings them back. At this moment, Eileen, I haven't a penny till Lady Turtlegreen calls to pay the ten guineas for her hat."

Lady Turtlegreen arrived soon after the gas-man had gone. She arrived in a Rolls-Royce and sables.

"The Philistines are upon us, Mademoiselle," said Eileen. "The *consommé* lady is at this moment being ladled out of her limousine by her chauffeur, who is wearing his sage-green livery with spring onion-coloured gaiters, and his calves look like sage and onion stuffing. I wish I were as rich as she, without being quite so 'newly.'"

"You must speak more respectfully of our customers, Eileen. She'll overhear you one day."

"Perish the thought! I mean, let us cherish the portly!"

"Go and get her hat. She is quite a good-souled, big-hearted, broad-minded woman, even if a little *bourgeoise*."

"Not not so very little at that, either," said this irrepressible girl Eileen.

Lady Turtlegreen sailed in, all smiles and eau-de-Cologne, and said: "Got my feather-rat done, Maddermaiselle?"

Mam'selle said Eileen was bringing it in one moment.

"Long moment, ain't it?" said her ladyship. "I'm in a hurry."

"Eileen, Lady Turtlegreen is in a hurry."

Eileen appeared with a distressful face. "I can't find it, Mademoiselle. It's disappeared."

"Can't find it? But that's ridiculous!"

Mademoiselle joined in the search. So did Rose from the kitchen. Like the searchers for the cardinal's ring in "The Jackdaw of Rheims," they "turned up the rugs and examined the jugs," but they couldn't find that hat.

Lady Turtlegreen, who had come in like a lamb, went out snorting like a buffalo.

"You promised it would be ready to-day, Maddermaiselle. You've broke your promise. Since you don't keep your word, you can keep your rat. I shall in future go elsewhere for rats. Good morning, and the compliments of the season, and I think you are a very aggravating woman, Maddermaiselle."

"And the same to you, Lady Turtlegreen," said Mademoiselle sadly.

"If this is the way you treat your best customers, I shan't come to you for rats again. I wish you both as happy a Christmas as you deserve."

"And many of them," said Eileen disrespectfully, but firmly, as the shop door slammed and the best customer was Rolls-Royced away. "I wonder where her 'rat' is? I wish she wouldn't call her hat her 'rat.' If I was as imperfect a lady as she

is, I'd be tempted to say 'Rats' to her, 'and many of them.'"

"Eileen, that is not a nice expression."

"That's why I used it. Sorry, Mademoiselle. I'm afraid I do take liberties with my bump of reverence sometimes. Rose said to me the other day: 'The way you talk and carry on, Miss Eileen, anyone would think that you were the brass plate and Miss Mademoiselle the doormat.' I told her to speak more respectfully of you, Mademoiselle."

Mademoiselle was almost in tears. "What can have happen to the feather hat? Though it had wings, it can't have flown away. Do you think the gas-fitter took a fancy to it?"

"To put in his widowed mother's stocking? No, I don't think it escaped with the gas. I know!" cried Eileen. "I've got it! Oh, Rose, that priceless Rose of Killarney—that last rose of summer—why couldn't she leave it blooming well alone?"

"Eileen, your expressions get worse and worse, and more involved. What do you mean? You don't suspect that Rose has taken it? I'm sure Rose is honest."

"Honest as a suet pudding. She's too stupid to be anything else, and so is the gas-fitter. She's given the gas-fitter my lady's hat in mistake for a pheasant," said Eileen.

"As a matter of fact," said Mademoiselle, "with all those feathers on it, it did look rather like a pheasant, with the head curled round the brim in front, the wings at the side, and the tail sticking out behind. You made it look too lifelike, Eileen."

"That's where it has flown to. If the gas-fitter's widowed mother has half Rose's brains, she is at this moment plucking a ten-guinea Parisian work of art. Oh, my hat! To think of it being hung, drawn and quartered, and trussed and skewered and served up with bread-sauce and forcemeat balls! Rose, come here! You have given the gas-man one pheasant and one hat instead of two birds. There's the other half brace of pheasant left blooming alone on the table, like a study in still-life by a Dutchman."

Rose, hastily summoned from the atmosphere of the gas stove, said: "Sure, I thought I gave the gas-man a pair of braces of burrds, and if a hat has wings like a burrd, how was a poor girl from Killarney to know that a hat was a burrd or a burrd was a hat if a hat was more like a burrd than a burrd itself?"



This line of argument being regarded as unanswerable, Rose was told to lose no time in putting on her own hat and flying with all speed to the gas-man's house with the pheasant. She was then to retrieve the hat and convey it with still greater speed to the house of her ladyship, explain the mistake, and apologise for her stupidity.

Rose returned in an incredibly short space of time, breathless and triumphant, bearing a newspaper parcel.

"How quick you've been, Rose!"

"Sure it's meself has been quicker than my legs could carry me. As luck would have it, I saw her ladyship's car standing in the street, with herself inside it, so I says, 'Begging your ladyship a thousand pardons for being so stupid, here's your hat,' and then I rushed off to the gas-man and brought back the pheasant. I was just in time to stop the woman from plucking it, and here it is."

Mademoiselle was unable to speak, but Eileen, never at a loss for words, said: "My dear stupid Rose, you have piled Pelion on Ossa. You have added insult to lingerie—or, rather, to millinery. You have been and gone and brought back the hat and given our best customer the bird!"

"Stupid, Miss Eileen, when it's myself that thought of the clever plan to save time by giving her ladyship the hat first and getting it from the gas-fitter afterwards? You may laugh at Rose of Killarney for being Irish, but would an English colleen have thought of doing it that way?"

"If I were you, Rose, I'd go back to Killarney and drown myself in one of its lakes and fells, for you have at one fell swoop chased a wild goose, killed the eggs, and mislaid the golden bird. So you may as well hang your hat on the tit-willow tree, and we may as well follow your example and put the shutters up. Good-bye, Rose! Good-bye to summer!"

Rose departed to the kitchen to think it over.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Eileen," said Mademoiselle, "I think it is time I gave up millinery and took to something less exasperating."

"Why not give up millinering and take to the Squire?" asked Eileen. "He's asked you—in plain poetic Gallic—to fly with him to his twohold freehold woodland farm. Why not fly? He seems a nice, kind man. He must be. I thought so the very first time he bought a hat—for his sister."

"He's very kind, Eileen, and all that, but he's not the kind I would fly with, if I ever flew. I really don't think about him except as a friend and a good customer. He must be very fond of his sister to buy her so many hats."

"I don't believe he's got a sister," said Eileen. "I believe he buys hats merely to help you, because he loves you. Love sometimes takes that practical form."

"A man can be friendly without being in love."

"Then why does he crow like chanticleer and send you braces of pheasants, and ask you to fly to his nest? Philanthropic passion does not usually express itself quite so fully and tropically. The man's in love."

"I don't know. Men do lots of strange things even when they're sober and in their right minds. I've no intention of flying with him. I'd rather be a sister to him, if he hasn't got one already. I don't care about him otherwise in the least, Eileen."

"Don't you really and truly?"

"Not in the least."

Eileen heaved a deep sigh of relief, then she said: "Poor man!"

"Eileen," said Mademoiselle in surprise, "is it so with you?"

Eileen nodded, and Mademoiselle smiled and said: "Poor girl!"

"Love is more exasperating than millinery," said Eileen. "I wouldn't be a sister to him for the world."

"But you'd fly with him, Eileen, if he asked you?"

"I'd fly, walk, run, hop, step, jump, swim with him," exclaimed the girl. "Oh, had I the wings of a golden pheasant, the baritone chanticleer would not have to crow or flap his pinions twice. I'd slip under his gizzard wing at the first challenge of the trumpeter of dawn. I don't mind telling you that."

"I'm sorry he's wasting his music on me, Eileen. Now I am going to give you a present." She put the golden-winged hat on Eileen's head. "It suits you. Look at yourself."

"It's too expensive a present for me."

"It's not altogether a present. At the moment, my child, after Lady Turtle-green's unfortunate visit, I see no prospect of paying your week's wages, so keep the hat as a hostage. I'm sure, if Squire Barryton saw you in it——"

"Talk of the——"

... A little two-seater car, containing two men,

at that moment drew up opposite the shop. One of its occupants was Squire Barryton, the other his friend Kirkestrel, to whom he had said: "Come with me to make the acquaintance of my charming little milliner, the sweetest little lady in the world, who, if she is not hard-hearted, will shortly be queen of Barryton Court."

"What's her name?" asked Kirkestrel.

"I only know her up to now as 'Mademoiselle Adeline,' but as soon as I know her real name I'll introduce you, and you shall be my best man, Kirky."

"Pleasure, I'm sure," said Kirky.

"She's got a charming assistant, too," continued the Squire. "If you don't mind, old chap, keep the assistant engrossed in earnest conversation. My golden pheasant is a shy bird, and I've not yet had a real chance of talking to her alone. The assistant is always there, hovering about."

"Sort of chapeauron, eh? And I'm to head her off?" said Kirky. "Right ho! What shall I talk to her about? Hats? Hey?"

"Hats, if you like. Keep on talking hats till I say when. As soon as we get inside the shop, I want you to make a bee-line for the assistant and nail her down to the counter with a perpetual flow of brilliant conversation and witty dialogue, while I lay my heart at the feet of my jolly little milliner?"

"Yes, but how shall I know which one to make a bee-line for?"

"Easy enough. My golden pheasant girl has a delightful habit of blushing like carmine-tinted dawn the moment I enter the shop. The assistant is of a calmer countenance."

"Right-ho, Tony. Then I am to address myself to the one that doesn't blush. Is that so?"

"Yes, dear boy, and don't try to make her. Remember, they are both absolute ladies, and that it's not a saloon bar. So don't walk in and say, 'Whisky and soda, my dear,' or anything savouring of a low comedian at a cheap buffet. Say, 'Do you sell hats?' or something highly respectable like that."

"Right," said Kirky, "also ho! I'm to talk headgear to the assistant while you pour out your heart's purest undiluted piffle into the shell-like ear of the lady principal. I've got you, Tony. Carry on!"

"Talk hats, Kirky—if necessary, *buy* hats! But keep the assistant's attention distracted all the time. Don't make a

muddle of it and distract the wrong girl. Remember, make a bee-line for the one that doesn't blush!"

Having arranged this programme, the two men walked into the shop just as Eileen was trying on the golden feathery hat. Man proposes; woman disposes. Both ladies blushed furiously.

"Signal failure at first blush, eh?" queried Kirky. "It's a double dawn!"

Barryton nudged him hastily towards Mademoiselle, and Kirkestrel, obedient to his cue, at once made a bee-line for the counter and said to Mademoiselle: "Er—do you sell hats? Of course, naturally. I mean—er—you might show me something *chic* in the autumn headwear line. What about that dream in cream thatch with the orchestral orchids round and round its mulberry bush? I don't want an ordinary hat. I want something quiet but dinky—dashing but domesticated—suitable for one's aunt—if one had an aunt. I rather like the fruity one with the grape nuts rampant and the custard powder trimmings."

Barryton, who meanwhile had bee-lined for Eileen, also stood by the long pier glass. He said: "*Bon jour*, Mademoiselle. Er—I hope you got the birds all right?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle got the birds—one of them at least. The other has gone astray. Wandered into the woods, perhaps. It was mistaken by our Irish maid for a hat, and was last heard of in a Rolls-Royce. We expect it to be returned in high dudgeon shortly. Do you see anything you fancy—for your sister—to-day, Squire?"

Barryton gazed at her with his clear, blue-grey, sportful eyes, and said solemnly: "I see something I fancy exceedingly, Mademoiselle, but not for my sister."

"Oh, this one?" said Eileen, thinking he alluded to the hat on her head. "It's not for sale."

"I didn't mean that one. Is it already sold?"

"It was given to me as a present to-day."

Barryton frowned. "By whom, might I inquire? That is—sorry—excuse the brusque question. I hope the fellow—"

"It wasn't a fellow; it was a lady."

"Of course. Of course. How clumsy of me to suppose otherwise!"

"Do you like this hat, Squire Barryton?"

"I think—enhanced by its wearer—it will become her as much as a coronet will. It suits you as 'the dawn in russet mantle clad' suits a high Eastern hill. The hat is

unpurchasable, the head is priceless; all the same, I want to make an offer of—"

"I know you do. Won't you talk to Mademoiselle?"

"There is nothing I prefer or desire or love more than to talk to Mademoiselle for ever."

"About hats?"

"Hats—or even h-hearts."

"Oh, lucky Mademoiselle! She will love to listen to you—perhaps for ever!"



"'Your families must be funny,' said Lady Turtlegreen."

"I hope so. May I make a bid for the hat?"

"For your sister?"

"I haven't one. She's a myth."

"Then on whom do you bestow all the hats that you buy?" Eileen asked rather fiercely. "That is, forgive the abrupt question, but——"

"Not at all. You have a perfect right to ask. I buy them for nobody. I give them to my man—to my valet."

"You are a hero, then, even to him. You must be a brave man to buy so many expensive hats for nobody. I am sure you deserve the fair, and she deserves you. Won't you talk to Mademoiselle about it? Be brave! Ask her nicely! Who knows what her answer might be?"

"I can guess it already," said Barryton joyfully. "Mademoiselle, you read Chanticleer's message on the label?"

"I translated it to Mademoiselle Adeline."

"Mademoiselle Adeline, I do not yet know your real name."

"I—oh, I'm just Eileen."

"Eileen, why do you always speak of yourself in the third person?"

"Do I?"

"Yes. You say, 'I read it to Mademoiselle,' as though you were not Mademoiselle Adeline, but somebody else."



"Allow me to make you this small head-offering by way of compensation for your disappointment."

"I *am* somebody else!" cried Eileen, with bright light in her eyes and a throb of delight in her pulses. She pointed to Mademoiselle. "That's Mademoiselle Adeline. I'm only her assistant. You've got us mixed."

Barryton, perplexed, turned towards the counter. "Mademoiselle," he began, "please tell me who you are."

Kirkestrel gave him a push. "Go away!" he said. "This is Miss Patricia Foyle, otherwise known as Mademoiselle Adeline. I'll introduce you later. Go and talk golden pheasantries to your friend. I'm busy buying hats. A most engrossing occupation. Requires one's undivided attention. Carry on, Tony! Don't say when yet. I've not finished. And don't intrude on our private conversation, please! You've interrupted the flow, and I've got to start all over again *da capo*."

Barryton laughed, shrugged, and turned away. Eileen had slipped out of the shop. She had fled from the splendid discovery that Barryton had been wooing her all the time under the impression that she was the milliner and Mademoiselle the assistant. She escaped to the showroom.

Instead of Eileen, Barryton found Rose of Killarney facing him with a broad grin on her face and a naked, recently-plucked pheasant in her hand. "The gas-man has brought back the burrd, Mademoiselle, and shall he wait for an answer? Miss Eileen's in there, sir," she added aside to Barryton, "all alone. Step in after her, sir, and then you'll be all alone, too."

Barryton found Eileen in the showroom, writing. "I'm answering your note," she said. "I would have answered it before had I known it was addressed to me."

He sat down beside her and took the pencil from her hand. "Don't write. I would rather have it from your lips. Is it to be the nest in the woods, Eileen? The woods are waiting."

"Yes, Chanticleer. You have made the sun rise."

Kirkestrel, left at the counter with Mademoiselle, lost no time in saying: "Now, Mademoiselle, we have talked enough hats. Let us talk of something even more fascinating—to wit, yourself. The moment I set eyes on you——"

"Please, miss, the gas-fitter says——" burst in Rose, reappearing from the kitchen.

Kirkestrel wheeled round upon her impatiently. "We are not discussing gas,"

he said. "Can't you see I'm buying a hat? Here, take it!" And, picking up the nearest "Parisian" creation, he clamped it on Rose's head and hustled her away towards the back premises.

But Rose, like Nature, was not to be pitchforked out. She recurred promptly. "Please, miss, the gas-fitter says, can he have the bob now?"

"The bob?" exclaimed Kirkestrel. "This girl is insatiable! Have I not explained to you that Mademoiselle is busy selling hats? That I am equally busy buying hats? We're both busy. Go away. I hate you! Wait! Take this!"—handing her some silver. "Give him his bob and keep the change. And this." He seized another hat and thrust it upon Rose. "Give that to the gas-fitter with my compliments. Tell him it's for his mother, and tell him to get on with his gassing, or he'll be cut off at the main. Tell him I'm talking æsthetics to Mademoiselle. Bid him talk anæsthetics to you till a fitter time. Go! Gas him! If necessary, give him ether!"

Rose went, with one "Parisian" hat on her head, another in her hand, while in the other hand she still carried the naked pheasant. She told the gas-man, "The gentleman says I'm to give you *either*."

"Now, Mademoiselle," said Kirkestrel, "once more we are——"

Ping! The shop door tintinnabulated, and the sable-clad Lady Turtlegreen, like a goddess from a car, broadcasted herself upon the scene. She came beaming into the shop with a pheasant in her hand, which she carried by the label at its neck. She threw herself with all her weight, pheasant and all, upon the bosom of Mademoiselle and clasped her in her sable arms.

"How sweet of you, Mademoiselle! How perfectly sweet! To send me the lovely bird with the lovely message round its neck, like a dove of peace, and all in French, too! I couldn't read it, but my chauffeur—who used to be a gentleman of education—says it means, 'Forget your rat and take the bird instead!' You shouldn't have done it, Mademoiselle. I wasn't really cross with you—only vexed. Oh, there's my feather rat!" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of the golden pheasant on Eileen's head. "Ten guineas, wasn't it? Well, Mademoiselle, I'm going to give you a surprise. I'm going to give you *twelve*."

"It's no longer mine to sell, Lady Turtlegreen. I've given it to Eileen."

"To Eileen? It's *much* too good for a shop-girl!"

Barryton came forward. "You are wrong, Madame," he said. "*Nothing* is too good for this lady."

"Or for this lady," said Kirkestrel.

Lady Turtlegreen looked at the two men and the two girls. Then she beamed volumes. "Oh, it's like that, is it? Well, I'm sure I congratulate all four of you. I, for my part, never regretted marrying Sir Hummock Turtlegreen, though he hadn't been knighted and made a lady of me in them days. Ah, you two girls can hardly realise the joy of having a 'andle to your name. It makes you feel like a hurdy-gurdy playing 'Bubbles.' Now, Eileen, if you've quite finished preening yourself in my feather rat, I'll take it away with me now in my car."

"It isn't for sale, Lady Turtlegreen," said Eileen. "You told Mademoiselle to keep it."

"But I want it. I've decided to have it. How much is it?"

"It's one of those things money can't buy," said Eileen.

"Oh, it is? Sell me that 'at, and stop talking through it! I'll give you twenty pounds for it. There!"

"There's *rien faisant*," said Eileen. "Nothing doing."

"Now, don't throw away the offer of a lifetime, Eileen. Twenty pounds is a lot of money all at once for a shop gi—for a young lady in your position. It will help you and your young man to set up house. Or were you thinking of taking furnished rooms at first?"

"We thought of roosting on the branch of a fir tree for a start," said Eileen. "My young man tells me he's got the wood ready."

Lady Turtlegreen was not good at following the poetical flights of golden pheasants.

"Is he a wood-carver?"

"Squirrel," said Eileen, who had not been long in finding this pet name for her "Squire," "you haven't told me what sort of a wood we're going to roost in, or how many trees there are in it."

"I don't know the exact number of trees," said the Squire. "They are fairly extensive woods. About twenty-nine thousand acres, I think. My steward will tell you."

"Gracious!" Lady Turtlegreen gasped, and turned to Mademoiselle. "Is your young man in the timber trade, too?"

"I really don't know. I haven't asked him." Kirkestrel was just then writing his name on a cheque to pay for three hats he had bought. Lady Turtlegreen looked over his shoulder.

"You've forgot to put your initials to your signature, young man."

"I don't think it matters," said Kirkestrel.

"But will your bankers cash it?"

"They always have up to now."

"Well, it seems unbusinesslike. How do they know who you are if you don't put your initials? There might be other people of the same name with banking accounts."

"Well, you see," said Kirky, "in our family there's only one of us at a time who is—er—actually—er—it, to put it clearly. My friend Tony there doesn't sign his initials either for a similar family reason."

"Your families must be funny," said Lady Turtlegreen.

"Without being vulgar, though," said Kirkestrel. He handed Mademoiselle the cheque, and took a large picture hat he had purchased.

"Allow me," he said, handing it to Lady Turtlegreen, "to make you this small head-offering by way of compensation for your disappointment. Believe me, if I am any judge of hats and their wearers, this tile will be more in keeping with your style than the feathered one, which suits Miss Eileen, or the crêpe de chine one with the side-whiskers of wisteria pompoms which I selected as appropriate to the gas-bag's mother. Observe how that clump of globed peonies in the foreground is balanced by what looks like a bunch of rainbow troutlets in a pool of tomato sauce on the near side. Take it, madam! Wear it, and leave the wilder plumage which gleams on the brow of the golden game-bird unruffled save by the clear chant at dawn of the red-combed rooster who, as Shakespeare tells us—see Hamlet, Act One—sings all night long on Christmas Eve."

"Kirky," interrupted Barryton, "give the lady her hat and shut up!"

"I don't want that one—I want the feather rat," sobbed Lady Turtlegreen, almost in tears.

Eileen discrowned her own head and handed Lady Turtlegreen the golden pheasant hat. "Give me the label off the pheasant's neck," she said. "You can keep the bird."

# HOW NOEL FETCHED THE DOCTOR

By THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE E. VARIAN

JOHN BLISMORE STANWAY was born in the big house on Haystack Island. His maternal grand-parents, an uncle, two aunts, and many more distinguished persons from up and down the river, were on hand to welcome him. They were all delighted with Master John, and the Malecites, eighty strong, fired guns into the air all day.

The people up at the house decided that John had Blismore eyes, a Stanway chin, a Blismore voice, Stanway shoulders, Gostwick hands, and De Vebber ears. His father, Captain Stanway, said that John would make a splendid soldier, but Grandfather Blismore was of the opinion that the boy had better read for Holy Orders and become a bishop. Mrs. Stanway begged them to leave him as he was for a few years at least.

Things went well with John Blismore Stanway until the December of his first year. Then one night he fell suddenly and seriously ill. Mrs. Stanway, the Captain, and the old Irish nurse did their best for him until dawn; then they sent for Noel Bear, the Malecite. Noel came over to the big house on the run. He found Captain Stanway desperate with fear, the nurse in tears, Mrs. Stanway white-faced but calm, with the baby in her arms. The Captain seized Noel by the arm.

"The doctor!" he exclaimed. "You must go for the doctor, and bring him back with you! Here's a note for him. If Doctor West can't come, bring another. Duke and Dandy are sharp shod, and they're being harnessed now. Take Gabe with you. Leave the horses in town with Gabe, and come back with fresh horses—and good ones—even if you have to buy them. Understand? The baby is ill—very ill."

Noel glanced once at the baby in his mother's arms, nodded, and went from the room. His face was sullen, but his heart was filled with anxiety for the infant and with pride at being chosen for this service in the time of need.

Stanway, haggard of face, paced the room. "Fifteen miles!" he muttered. "Oh, Heavens—and fifteen back! Thirty miles! Why did we risk it? Thirty miles—and a hundred chances of accident! We should have a doctor in this parish. Thirty miles!"

The river had frozen early that year, and the few light falls of snow had been blown away from the glare ice. For fifty or sixty miles the great stream was like glass.

Noel Bear was soon ready for the journey. He wore boots instead of mocassins, and into the back of the low pung he stowed a pair of fine skates that Mrs. Stanway had given him. In the east the sun was rising, red as fire, when he and Gabe Paul took their seats in the pung and tucked the blankets and bison robes round themselves. The temperature was ten below zero, but there was no wind. As the sun ascended, the cold would decrease.

The horses, Duke and Dandy, fled across the frosty snow and struck the river with a clatter of sharp iron and splintering ice. They were sharp shod, as the Captain had said. Their shoes cut into the hard ice at every stroke, and sent the glistening chips flying. They were big horses of racing and hunting stock, and they did not know how to trot. When they were in a hurry they either cantered or ran. Now they cantered, and the narrow pung at their heels blew along like a feather.

Gabe held a big fur mitten in front of his face, but Noel leaned far forward, with his eyes wide, and a rein in each hand. Round

his right wrist he had taken a turn of the rein, for his right hand was not strong.

They had the whole glistening river to themselves. They passed the mouth of the Oromocto and the little cluster of grey roofs behind the deserted shipyard as a flying duck might pass. The red faded from the eastern horizon. As the sun ascended, it lost its colour, until at last it stood in the pale blue sky like a round flake of ice. They passed the head of Oromocto Island, and still the horses cantered. Off the front of Judge Blismore's place they broke into a gallop of their own accord, as if to show what they could do. The light pung flew like a bird at their heels, and the chipped ice showered behind them. Gabe did not approve of this rate of speed, but Noel Bear let the horses gallop for two miles before pulling them down to a canter. From the canter he eased them to a walk, but after fifteen minutes he let them run again.

The big brown horses were white as snow with frozen sweat when they reached the little town. Gabe Paul took them round to the King's Hotel stables, and Noel Bear hurried to Doctor West's house. At the door the Malecite met a rebuff.

"You go round to the back door and wait in the kitchen—if the cook will let you," said the servant. "The doctor hasn't had his breakfast yet. He's still in bed. The cheek of you Injuns beats anything I ever heard tell of afore I come to this country."

"You tell 'im Stanway's big hunter, Noel Bear, wanter see 'im," replied Noel. "Tell 'im Stanway's baby a mighty sick papoose. You git!"

"He's in bed!" exclaimed the servant angrily. "D'ye think I'd rouse him out for a beggarly Injun?"

Noel grunted, stepped across the threshold into the warm hall, shouldered the doctor's man to one side, and ran up the stairs. A swift glance showed him several closed doors round the square upper hall. He went to the nearest, pushed it open, and entered a bedroom. It happened to be the very room that he sought.

"What in thunder is the matter now?" cried Doctor West, sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes. "What d'ye mean by entering my room without knocking? You'll get your walking ticket, my man!"

"You come along with Noel Bear, doctor," said the Malecite. "Stanway, he say you come. John a'mighty sick. You hurry quick."

He thrust Captain Stanway's letter into the

hand of the bewildered doctor. Doctor West was accustomed to unusual happenings and queer people. He glanced once towards Noel, then read the letter.

"Noel Bear, I'm hardly fit for the journey," he said. "I've been ill. You'd better get another doctor."

"Take too long time," replied Noel. "You come—quick."

"Horses ready?"

"Gabe Paul bring fresh horses round one—two minutes."

"Just step outside, then, and I'll dress. Tell Smiley to bring some coffee and bacon up here immediately. Have you had your breakfast?"

"No. Me git some now in kitchen."

Noel went downstairs and gave the doctor's orders to Smiley; then he found his way to the kitchen and demanded something to eat.

"Doctor, he say so," he explained. "Me Noel Bear, Stanway's big hunter. Stanway's papoose sick."

He got what he wanted. He spent exactly six minutes in devouring bread and bacon and gulping hot coffee; then, at a jangle of bells outside, he dashed from the kitchen into the street. Gabe Paul was there, with two fresh horses hitched to the Captain's pung. They were very fresh, and Gabe was having all he could do to hold them. Noel Bear helped him.

Ten minutes later the front door opened and Doctor West appeared, in a big fur coat, with a leather bag in his hand. The doctor was a thin man, with sandy whiskers and kindly eyes. He looked pale, and walked slowly from the doorstep to the pung. Gabe Paul got out of the pung and helped the doctor to get in. Noel took his seat on the doctor's right hand and picked up the lines. Away went the very fresh horses at a pace that in speed almost equalled that of Duke and Dandy, but it was not so "clever" or steady.

"Fool horses!" muttered Noel, holding hard.

The pung was soon on the river again, and again the splintered ice was flying from iron-shod sharpened hoofs. The doctor sank his chin deep into his fur collar and closed his eyes. Noel grunted and hung hard to the reins. These strange horses lacked common-sense and had mouths of leather. Nine miles of the journey they made in fine time, however, although the pung slewed on one runner and almost upset more than once.



When they reached Musquash Point, the horses were feeling the pace in legs and lungs—in everything except their silly brains and tough mouths. At the Point a number of huge logs of pine were frozen to the ice. The horses headed for them; Noel pulled hard on the right rein, and tried to swing them between the logs and the nearer shore. The running horses cleared one of the big pines by a few feet, but the pung slewed and struck it broadside on.

At the splintering crash, the horses leaped forward with renewed effort; the box of the pung was ripped from the runners; the shafts were torn away; the doctor and robes were cast out upon the ice, and Noel Bear, clinging to the reins, was jerked over the dashboard and dragged along at an amazing pace. But he did not lose his wits. Sliding along on his face, he continued to tug with all his strength on the right rein.

Fortunately for him, the ice was as smooth as glass, and he wore a strong deerskin coat over his blanket "jumper." One of the horses stumbled, but regained his feet with a snort. The heads of the animals came slowly round toward the snow-sheeted shore and the thickets of willows. They were of two minds now, and began to pull against each other. They came down to a clumsy, jolting, plunging canter, and still Noel Bear, sliding along at their heels, jerked their stubborn heads round to the right. They reached the shore, plunged across the strip of snowy beach with such a shower of stinging frost-dust at their heels as almost to smother the determined Malecite, and tore into a thicket of leafless willows. Here one of them stepped on a hidden root and, falling heavily, wrenched its mate to a standstill.

Noel Bear found his feet as quick as a cat, leaped forward, and sat down upon the head of the fallen horse. The Indian's breath was gone, his face was cut by flying ice, and his eyes were full of snow, but he kept his seat upon the head of the struggling animal.

Ten minutes later Noel and the horses returned to the wreck of the pung and the uncomplaining doctor. The horses hung their heads and trembled. They had had their fun and would behave sensibly—until the next time. Noel put the reins into the doctor's hands, cast one glance at the widely-scattered pung, then picked up his skates and began strapping them on his feet.

"What the mischief are you going to do now?" demanded the doctor.

"Go right 'long," replied Noel. "Lose fifteen minute a'ready."

With the skates on his feet, he examined the wreckage of the pung. He found the whiffle-trees and spread-chain and hitched them to the traces. With strips cut from a blanket he bound one corner of the big fur robe to the ring of the spread-chain. Then, taking the reins from the doctor, he invited him to lie down on the robe, on top of his precious leather bag, and hold on tight.



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"Noel cracked the lash again.

The doctor smiled grimly and obeyed. He was a man of little speech.

Noel, with the reins held tight in his left hand, took up the long whip. He cracked the lash smartly in the air, and at the same moment took a long stroke forward. The horses started away down-river at a spanking nervous trot. The doctor hung on desperately to the sliding robe and closed his eyes. Noel skated along easily, but the pace was not fast enough for him. Precious minutes had been lost, and a minute might save the life of the baby of Haystack Island. So Noel cracked the lash again at the horses'

heels, and the doctor clung more desperately than ever to the ropes of blanket that held the robe to the galloping horses. Noel was put to his best speed now, and sometimes, when he failed to keep pace with the horses, he was dragged along by the reins.

So the glittering miles rushed under them and were left behind. Men looked out upon that strange passage with wonder, and waved their arms or stood motionless as if spell-bound. Two big dogs took to the ice and gave chase. The horses were crazy with fright at the shapeless sliding thing behind

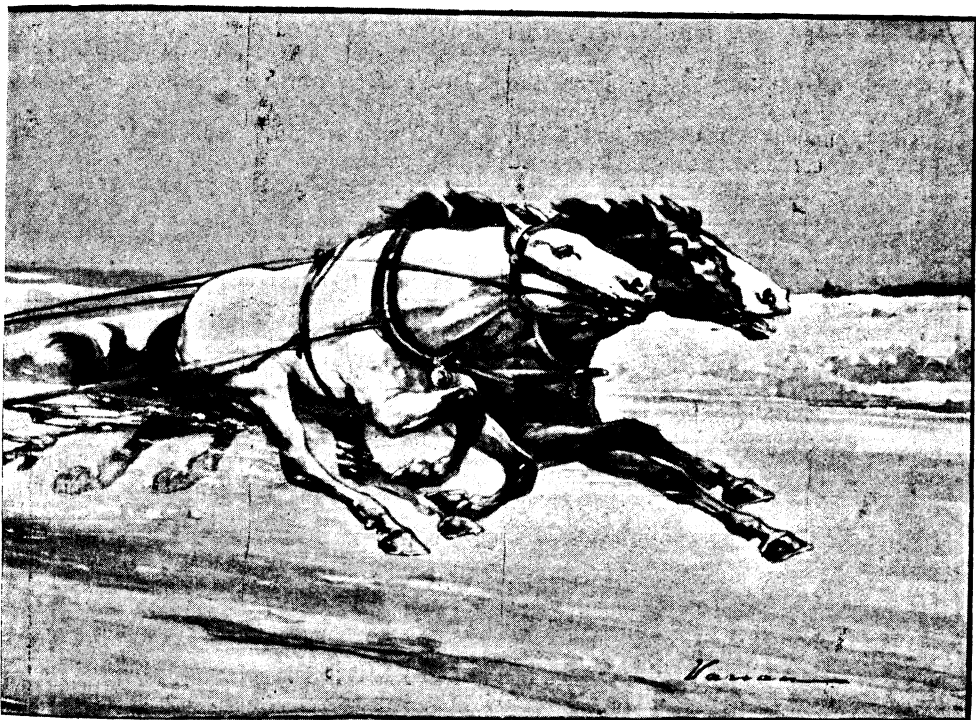
had been very ill. He looked helplessly at the Malecite.

"Well, here's the end of it," he said—"the end of the maddest journey I ever undertook."

At that Noel Bear got to his feet. His face was cut. He pointed down-stream with his maimed hand to the head of Haystack Island and the big house among the leafless elms.

"Pretty near there. You run, maybe?"

"Sorry, but I couldn't run ten yards—or walk fifty," replied the doctor. "I'm as



(The Perry Mason Company, Boston, U.S.A.)

"So the glittering miles rushed under them and were left behind."

them and the skating Indian at their heels. The big dogs, yelping as they ran with their bellies to the ice, came up with them, and at that moment the ropes of blanket parted. One of the Indian's skates encountered a corner of the robe, and Noel fell heavily. The horses, freed from their sliding burden, but still yoked together at the collars, turned in a wide curve and started up-river for home, with the clattering whiffle-trees at their heels and with the dogs leaping after them.

Doctor West got weakly to his feet, with the bag in his hand, looked round him dizzily, and then sat down on the robe. He

weak as a kitten. Man, I had a temperature of a hundred and three only two days ago. I'm sorry."

"That's a'right," said Noel. He wiped the blood from his forehead, stooped and tightened the straps of his skates, then slid over and took up the broken ends of the strips of blanket. He passed them over his shoulder and gripped them with both hands.

"Lie down and hang on tight," he said.

The doctor obeyed like a child. Noel began to skate, slowly and jerkily at first, but gradually he gathered speed and steadiness. Noel was short and thick-set, and now

he leaned far forward, with bowed head, and called upon every ounce of bone and muscle, every nerve, every spark of spirit, to urge him along. Speed gathered in his ringing blades. He stared down at the grey ice flowing away beneath his feet and thought of little John Stanway.

At last he heard a shout close in front of him. His hands freed the rope of blanket which cut so cruelly into his shoulder. His legs wilted beneath his tottering weight, and his lungs felt as if they were about to burst. He spun round on his long skates, then fell, and lay gasping on the ice.

Noel Bear had played the game to the last grain of his endurance. He did not open his eyes or speak when two young Malecites picked him up and carried him across the frozen meadow to the house. He sprawled in the deep chair in which they had placed him, only half conscious. At last he opened

his eyes, but he did not move. He saw that he was alone in the Captain's sitting-room. The house was strangely quiet. Noel could hear nothing except his own laboured breath, the soft purring of the fire, the muffled ticking of the tall clock in the hall. So he remained for an hour, content to lie limply in the deep chair and wait.

He heard a step on the stairs. The door opened and closed, and Captain Stanway stood before him. He looked up inquiringly at the big man's face. The Captain's blue eyes were shining and his cheeks were aglow.

"You were in time, Noel Bear," he said in a queer, muffled voice. "The doctor has told me how you did it. God bless you, Noel Bear! What do you want—that I have? How can I ever—make a return to you for this?"

"That's a'right," said Noel. "Me and you one brother."



## RESPONSIBILITY.

**Y**OUR bent for pastures new it holds in check,  
On every side it cramps your liberty,  
It hangs a clogging millstone round your neck—  
Prosaic, dull responsibility.

Adventure beckons—Duty bars the way,  
As, by the daily harness chafed and galled,  
With grim yet patient irony you pay  
The piper for the tune another called.

Yet pause and think. A lofty tribute glows  
About the humdrum path, the heavy yoke.  
With well-placed confidence Headquarters chose  
Your strength to stay and steady feeble folk.

JESSIE POPE.



A BAD BARGAIN.

"THOSE moth-balls you recommended were useless. The little beggers are so quick I haven't hit one of 'em!"

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### DUTCH COURAGE.

By B. A. Clarke.

"You are all behaving very absurdly," said Mrs. Vane. "It is simply childish to laugh like that at a system of poultry feeding endorsed by all the greatest authorities."

"Excuse my seeming to doubt you, mother," said Andrew, "but where did you get this acquaintance with expert opinion?"

"Is there any such consensus of expert opinion?" asked Bertha. "Beyond 'Friend to Fowls' in the correspondence columns yesterday, what support is there, mother, for your proposal to give our hens beer?"

"Did I catch the word 'hens'?" said Fred. "Is the motion before the house that alcoholic privileges be denied to respectable cocks?"

"The object being to increase the number of eggs," said Mrs. Vane, "stimulant should be for the hens only; but I can't be bothered to differentiate, and shall pour a quart of ale into the poultry food next Sunday."

"Our birds will spurn it," said Bertha. "I am sure I have read that the animal world teaches man a great moral lesson by refusing to touch alcohol."

"As a beverage," said Fred. "The zoological pledge is very explicit upon that point."

The following Sunday into the hot mash cook had prepared Mrs. Vane poured a quart of what the local publican had sold her as "a good, strong knock-about ale," and no fowl

refused it. They were intelligent birds, and no doubt the distinction between alcohol taken in food and taken as a beverage was patent to them. Upon the great majority the innovation had no visible effect beyond inclining them to that other human indulgence—Sunday after-dinner naps. The ruler of the roost, a Leghorn cock, became hilarious, but did not proceed from that stage into the combative, even when an adolescent, which hitherto had passed for a particularly well-conducted young hen, flew in his face, spurring and pecking. Before anyone could interfere, the intimidated Leghorn had been chased into the dormitory.

"The first result of your experiment, mother," said Fred, "is to lessen our future supply of eggs. We might never have discovered that this was a cockerel, and have coerced it into laying by sheer force of suggestion."

At this juncture the game-cock from next door alighted in the garden and crowed tauntingly—his afternoon custom. Long it had been a humiliation to the Vane boys that no cock of theirs had ever had the spirit to resent this. Even their mother wished that her high-priced birds were braver. The invader's back was to the fowl-house, and he was bewildered as to what had struck him. And then he rose from the dust to demolish his paltry foe. But the light-weight champion was fighting drunk. There was a whirlwind round—which Mrs. Vane might have stopped, but didn't, and her sons



THE NEW YEAR PARTY:

wouldn't have for worlds—and then the game-cock, daunted and discomfited—flew on to the wall and ran along it, the alleged pullet in pursuit, until the wall proved too narrow for its serpentine. The Vanes ran to see if their champion had sustained any injury, their approach causing the game-cock to flutter

down on to his own domain, where he ran behind a garden roller to recover his morale. Looking down over the wall, the Vanes saw their bird on its back in a bed of pansies. It was shaken by the fall, but apparently not injured, certainly not sobered, for it was smiling at the sky, incoherently garrulous.



HIS DAUGHTER'S V(O)ICE.

For the moment it had lost its bitterness: the game-cock was forgotten or forgiven.

Old Mr. Holt, the next-door neighbour, who had seen none of these happenings, emerged from the hot seclusion of his little greenhouse and began to roll the lawn. Beginning at the border nearest the Vanes', his first length

would have taken him close by the trespasser. On the far side of the roller the game-cock kept pace with it, to secure for him-elf the advantage of surprise in the second round, unaware, presumably, that his stirring address to himself before going into action was audible to the foe to whom it was vastly offensive.



The Vanes' bird listened and the glazed look left its eyes. It sprang up, shook the mould from its feathers, and, deciding that Mr. Holt must be responsible for these provocative remarks, flew at the old man, striking out with beak and spurs. With a scream Mr. Holt

taken completely by surprise, Jane," he said, emerging crestfallen.

In a conciliatory crow the game-cock seemed to be saying that surprise satisfactorily explained everything.

"Before our neighbours, too!" said his wife angrily.

Looking towards the fence, he saw a row of heads bobbing below it. He went into the house.

"He's gone—you can come up, all of you," said Mrs. Holt. Eight heads arose above the fence line, for although so far only two or three of Mrs. Vane's children have been reported, the whole seven of them were present.

"No wonder your champion won with such a corner!"

The boys laughed, but their mother became grandly dignified.

"By that piece of boxing slang you seem to be suggesting that we encouraged this fight."

"So we did," said John.

"You did, mamma," said Molly. "You clapped your hands."

Mrs. Vane blushed. "I am sure I didn't, although I must admit to being pleased by the result. Your bullying bird needed this lesson. So far were we from having arranged this encounter that until a minute before it began we believed our bird was a hen."

"What wrought such a revolution in its behaviour? Anything less hen-like than its conduct towards us this afternoon cannot be imagined.

It has beaten our game-cock on points, made Mr. Holt throw up the sponge, and when I interfered was trying to knock out our garden roller, to whom it was conceding twenty stone."



IN SEARCH OF A MODEL.

BETTY (to distinguished visitor): Please would you like to go down on your hands and knees?

VISITOR: Whatever for, my dear child?

BETTY: 'Cause I want to draw an elephant!

dropped the handle of his roller and rushed back into his greenhouse, slamming to the door behind him. Through the glass he saw his assailant flapping helplessly in the strong, capable hands of his young wife. "I was



GOOD HUNTING.



"Mother gave him beer," said Beryl mischievously.

"To improve his laying," explained Mrs. Vane hastily.

"His laying?"

Speaking all at once, as their tribal custom was, the Vane juniors told the whole story whilst their mother was taking the irrepressible cockerel to his sleeping quarters.

"Do you think," asked Mrs. Holt, when the story was told, "that your mother would tell me precisely what kind of beer was used."

"Surely your full-bred game-cock," said Tom, "doesn't need Dutch courage!"

"It isn't for him. I am thinking about my husband."



#### A BEDTIME STORY.

Why shouldn't I try my hand at a bedtime story? Everyone does it now.

Hullo, darlings! Uncle James speaking. Did you ever wonder why pink shrimps are pink? Well, let me tell you. Once they were all a nasty mud-colour, except one shrimp, and he was a lovely pink. He thought he was so grand, and gave himself such airs that all the other shrimps felt very cross and jealous. They tried to get pink, too, by rubbing themselves with red seaweed, but the colour soon got washed off.

So one day they said to the pink shrimp: "Look here, if you don't tell us how you got pink, we'll jolly well throw you into the haunted pool where the demon starfish lives!" Then the pink shrimp was very frightened and almost turned white, and said he made himself pink by having a very hot salt-water bath every night. So all the other shrimps did the same, and they have been pink ever since. When you see the sea boiling, you will know that the shrimps are having

their nightly bath and keeping themselves in the pink. Good night, dears! *R. H. Roberts.*



"Did you say," Jenkinson asked the landlady whose rooms he was inspecting, "that a



A BOXING DAY DISAPPOINTMENT.

"ARE you the regular postman?"

"Yes, mum."

"Then it must have been you who broke our bell."

music teacher occupies the next apartment? That will not be very pleasant."

"Oh," she replied eagerly, "the music teacher has ten children, and they make so much noise that you can't hear the piano at all."



Charles Hilder

#### A CHOICE OF EVILS.

DOCTOR: Now, remember, Mrs. Brown, if you give your husband anything to drink but water, it may kill him.

Mrs. Brown: Oh, but if I try to give him *water* he'll certainly kill me!



Charles Hilder

#### SHIFTING THE RESPONSIBILITY.

CLERK: May I have this afternoon off, sir? My wife wants me to —

HEAD OF FIRM: Sorry, can't be done! We're far too busy.

CLERK: Thank you very much indeed, sir!

## MY SILHOUETTES.

Hanging primly in a row  
On the old, oak-panelled wall,  
Where they fade or clearer grow,  
As the shadows lift or fall,  
Ancestors and ancestresses,  
Cut in paper black as jet,  
In old-fashioned coats and dresses  
May be seen in silhouette.

Great-Aunt Sarah in a hat  
Hangs by Great-Great-Uncle Bill  
(He in very high cravat  
And a most prodigious frill);  
While beyond them Great-Great-Grandma  
Who eloped to Gretna Green  
In a chaise with Great-Great-Grandpa,  
Once upon a time, is seen.



## REASON ENOUGH.

"Wor d'yer want to go an' leave our club an' play for th' Rovers for?"

"W'y, they gives their players reel lemon at 'arf-time, an' your lot never gets nothin' but acid drops!"

Though some scanty facts and dates  
Which old, yellowed papers show,  
Are, with what tradition states,  
All about you that I know,  
There is nought on which above you  
Now my heart more value sets.  
Of my treasures most I love you,  
Dear, old-fashioned silhouettes!

*Ada Leonora Harris.*



AN expert is said to be at work on an instrument which will enable people to see through stone. If this proves successful, it is thought that gazing through the pavement at the underground railway trains will become a popular pastime.

As a patroness of struggling and discouraged artists and musicians, Mrs. Gilling was not markedly successful, although she had plenty of money and a warm heart, and was interested in art and artists.

"I've brought some of my last year's sketches to show you," said one poor young man whom she had asked to call upon her, "but I do not feel satisfied with them. They are not as good in some ways as the work I did a year ago."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Gilling, with loud cheerfulness, patting him on the shoulder. "You paint just as well as you did last year—as well as you ever have. Your taste's improving, that's all."

At the table in a certain boarding-house a student boarder, who had been reading the scientific notes in a publication on a side-table, remarked:

"More than five thousand elephants a year go to make our piano keys."

"Fancy that!" exclaimed the landlady. "Isn't it wonderful what some animals can be trained to do?"



MORE English as she is spoke. From a card in a guest-house near the top of the Rigi: "Misters and venerable voyagers are advertised that when the sun him rise a horn will be blowed."

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To face matter at end.

A STRIKING FAILURE.

By G. J. Walker.

HENRY has been staying with us. He is one of those industrious individuals who can "turn his hand to anything," and it is the earnest wish of his afflicted friends that one of these days he will sprain his wrist badly in the process—if permanently, so much the better.

Directly he arrived he took the lawn-mower to pieces, and it is still in a fragmentary condition. Then he removed the leaky washer from the scullery tap. This wanted doing; but a hitch occurred over the fitting of the new one, so we turned off the water at the main, pending the arrival of the plumber, who is down with influenza.

Before Henry's arrival the back door stuck, making it annoyingly difficult to open; now we are taking in our household supplies, including two tons of coal, *via* the front entrance. It seemed ungracious to refuse his offer to tap the new cask of beer, but had I realised how far nine gallons can go when spread out evenly over a cellar floor, I should have hardened my heart. As it is, we are perforce teetotalers till next week's delivery.

But what Henry particularly prided himself on was clocks. I tried to be firm, but Henry has an insinuating manner, and, besides, I had watched his economical eye wander wistfully several times in the direction of my nearly new bicycle. So reluctantly I allowed him to adjust our four clocks so that they might strike simultaneously, and it kept him busy all the evening. The job was finished about 11.55 p.m., and at his request we all strolled into the garden to listen to the "massed midnight effect," as he called it—*One! Two! Three!*—while Henry smiled expectantly and waited for the applause.

But the clocks didn't wait. They went on steadily to forty-eight, and Henry went off to bed in a huff.

I suppose it was rude of us to laugh, but sixteen hours, neat, of Henry had left their mark.

Three of the clocks stopped during the night, and the other one developed an unpleasant kind of hiccup.

My wife was so afraid of Henry missing his early train that she thoughtfully rang up the post office before breakfast to get the correct time.

The next occasion on which Henry offers to put in a helpful week-end with us we shall all strike—simultaneously.

[Facing Third Cover.]

As Jones and his friend Brown were crawling along the highway one spring day where a few weeks before they had gone at top speed, Brown was moved to inquire why Jones drove his car so slowly.

"Why," explained Jones, "everybody's carrying home garden tools. You can't run over a man without risking a puncture."



THREE small boys were earnestly discussing the ability of their respective fathers.

The son of a song writer said: "My father can come home in the evening and sit down after supper and write a song and take it in



A DIVISION OF LABOUR.

AUNTIE: I hope you've let Bobby play with your sledge.

JACK: Oh, yes. I've only played with it going down hill, and he's played with it coming up.

town the next morning and sell it for five pounds."

"But my dad," eagerly spoke up the young heir of a short-story writer, "can write a story in an evening and take it in town the next morning and sell it for twenty pounds."

The preacher's son was a bit nonplussed until he had an inspiration. "My father," he announced triumphantly, "gets up in the pulpit and talks half an hour, and then it takes four men to carry the money up to him!"

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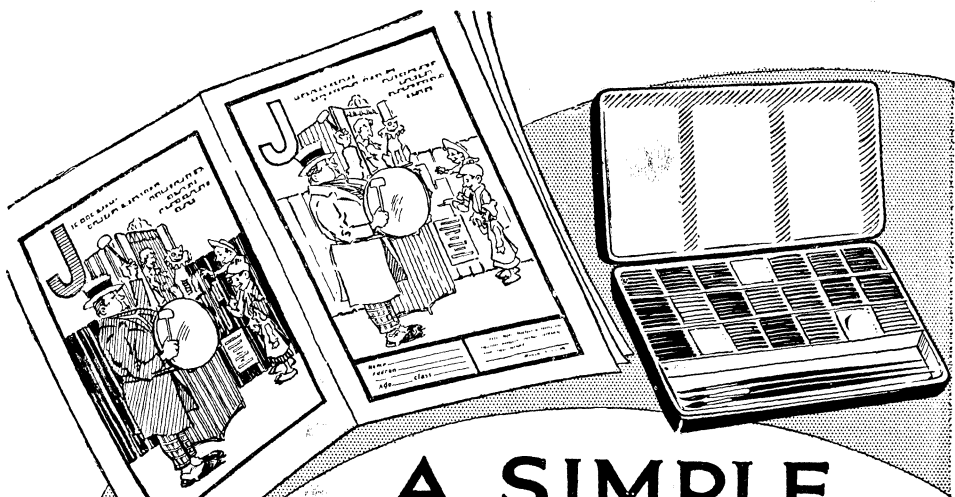
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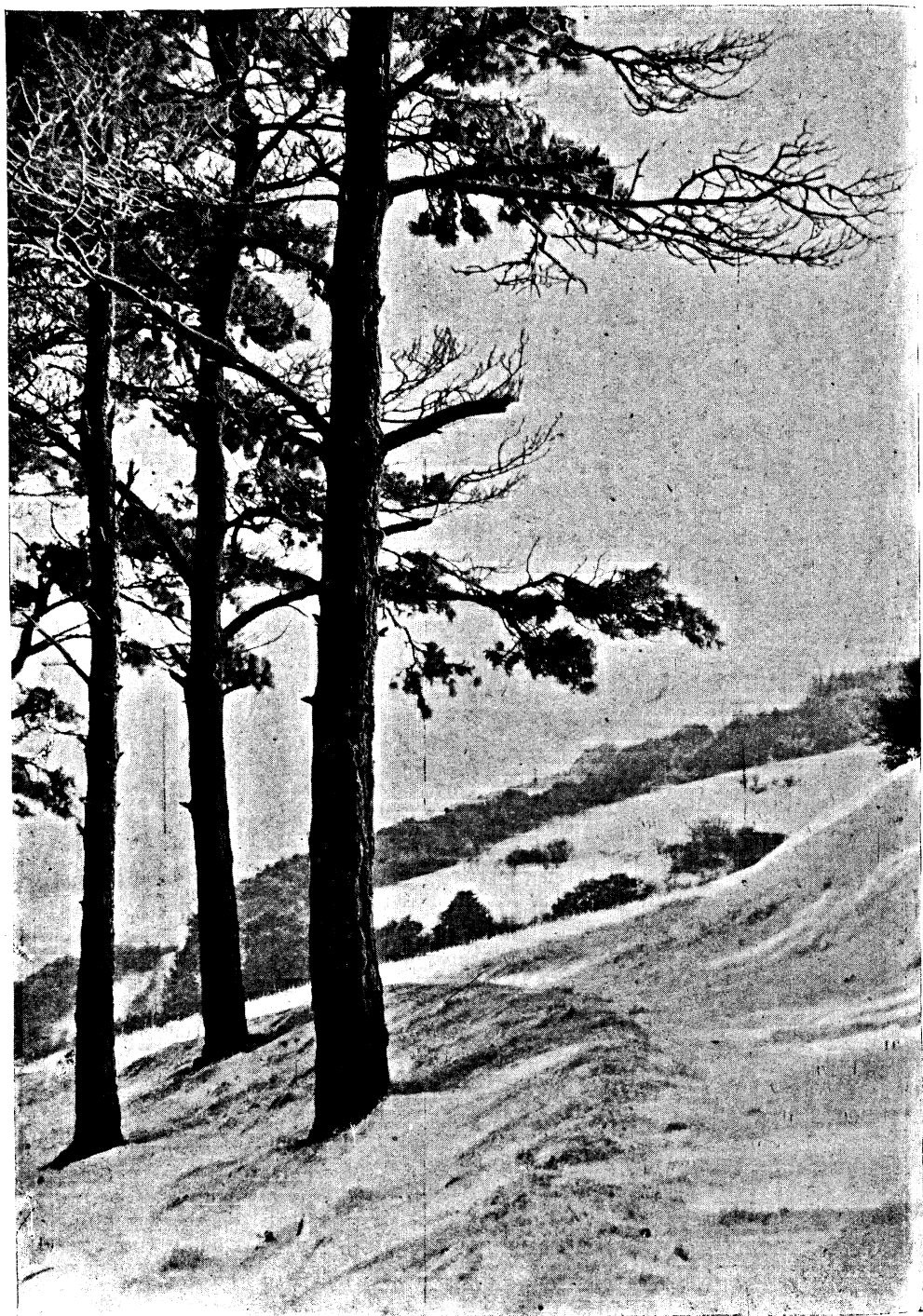
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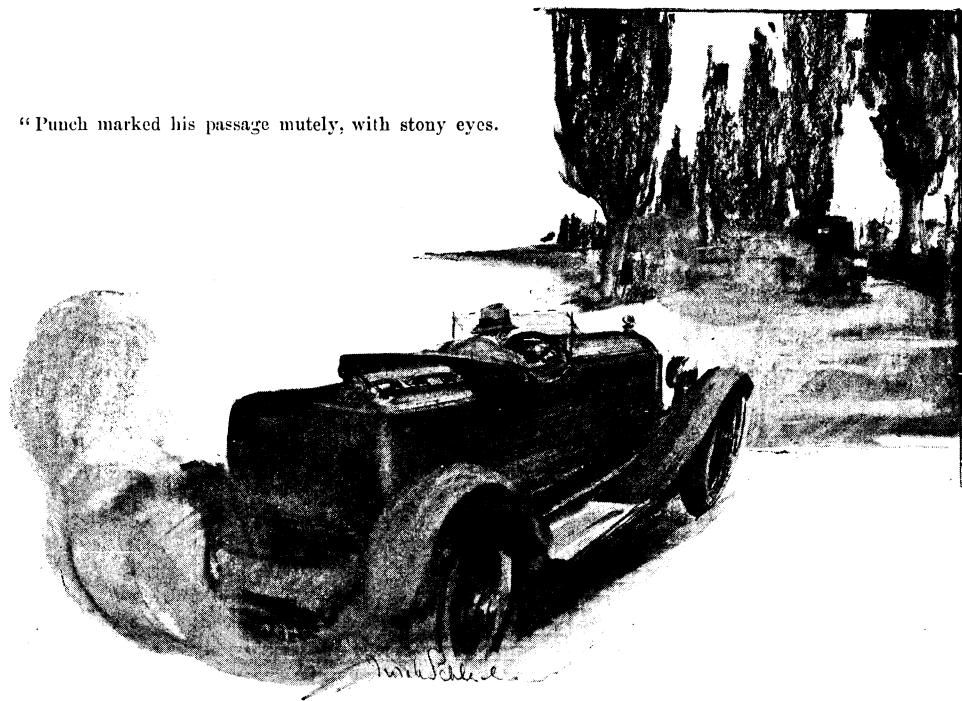




SUNSHINE AND SNOW.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY WILL F. TAYLOR.

"Punch marked his passage mutely, with stony eyes.



# A FOOL'S ERRAND

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "*Valerie French*," "*Berry and Co.*," "*Jonah and Co.*," "*Anthony Lyveden*,"  
"*The Brother of Daphne*," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

"I FEEL," said Fairfax, "that I must marry you."

His partner threw back her head and laughed delightedly.

"I warn you," she flashed, "I'm very rich."

"Oh, but why 'warn'?" said Fairfax, swinging her off her feet and then subsiding abruptly into a step of which the progressive nature was almost imperceptible. "Besides, I knew it before. Besides, if you had been poor, I shouldn't have spoken."

"Are you seriously asking me to be your wife?"

"I am. So far as you're concerned, the advantages of such a course may not be obvious. To be perfectly frank, I can hardly see them myself. Still, you might do

worse. At least, I'm clean, honest and sober."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Athalia Choate.

The man raised his eyebrows. Then he laid hold of the lady and started to dance.

It was a superb performance.

The floor was crowded, but, for all the notice of others that Fairfax seemed to take, it might have been empty. The two passed as one through the press, whirling, side-stepping, poising, translating every whim of the capricious measure into a masterpiece of motion. Athalia found herself treading as she had never trod before, yet making no mistake. The firm pressure upon her back became a powerful government, urging her to right or left, turning her, keeping her

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clear of collision, lifting her into the very spirit of the dance. The pace of the music grew hotter; the fury of the band, madcap. All about them people were labouring hilariously in a feverish endeavour to keep abreast of the rhythm. Fairfax's feet moved like quicksilver . . . the two swam the length of the ballroom with a clean rush . . . he was doing another step, and she was late . . . she was off her feet, and he was thrusting again into the very heart of the crowd . . . her head— Then the music stopped, and she was released.

"Am I sober?" said Punch Fairfax.

Miss Choate took a deep breath.

"Indubitably," she said.

They made their way down stairs to a dim library, and Fairfax drew two chairs to the slow wood fire. Then he gave her a cigarette, lighted it, and took one himself.

"Will you do me a favour?" he said.

"Try me," said Miss Choate.

"Be perfectly honest with me for a quarter of an hour."

The lady knitted her brows.

"What do you mean?"

"That will appear," said Fairfax. "The best way to learn a game is to start playing it. Now then. Are you averse to wedlock?"

Miss Choate started.

"I—I never agreed to play," she said uneasily.

Punch pulled his moustache.

"It's a very good game," he said. "I have to answer, too—any question you ask."

Athalia subjected the toe of a ridiculously tiny slipper to a prolonged scrutiny. At length—

"The answer," she said, "is in the negative."

"Good," said Fairfax, marking the excellence of her instep. "I'm seven years older than you. As a matter of fact, I think that's just about right. Do you agree?"

"I don't disagree," said Miss Choate slowly. "Anything between five and ten years. . . . When do I start?"

"When you please," said Fairfax, comfortably exhaling smoke. "What a sweet pretty leg you've got! Do you like my style?"

Miss Choate swallowed.

"You are quick," she said. "Of course, I've never played this before, so——"

"Neither have I," said Punch. "I give you my word. Er, do you?"

The lady stared into the fire.

"Yes," she said, "I do. If I had been poor, you wouldn't have spoken, would you?"

"I should not."

"Why?"

"Because I haven't enough to keep you—us as we should be kept."

Athalia laughed.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much," "I should not love thee, dear, so much," she quoted, "'loved I not *comfort* more.'"

"My dear," said Punch, "that was most admirably put. It exactly represents my point of view, your point of view and the point from which, furiously as they would deny the impeachment, every rational male and female in this edifice views the rich vale of matrimony."

Miss Choate raised her sweet eyebrows.

"We are a topping lot of wash-outs, aren't we?" she said.

Fairfax shook his head.

"Not at all. We're just wise. We have the sagacity to avoid the steep and narrow path which leads to heroism, because we blinkin' well know that we should never get there."

"But——"

"One moment. If Fortune puts us upon that path, as she may, that's another matter. We get to heroism then. But if we choose it of our own free will—never. Never. Because, sooner or later, we always regret our choice. And there ain't no admittance to 'eroism for gents wot regrets their choice."

"I seem to know that line," said Miss Choate. "Isn't it out of *His Sin against Her Love*?"

Fairfax appeared to wince.

"Tennyson, dear, Tennyson. Hiawatha's address to the Boy Scouts."

There was a pregnant silence.

As soon as she could trust her voice—

"Aren't you leaving love out of the question?" ventured Athalia.

"I don't think so. I know love jettisons fear, but I don't think it sandbags the instinct of self-preservation. I don't mean that if you tottered into a bear-pit I wouldn't go in to get you out. But if you dropped your lip-stick in—well, the bears could have it."

"Supposing it was the only lip-stick I had?"

"Nothing doing," said Fairfax.

"Supposing I said that if you got it out I'd marry you?"

"Love doesn't——"

"Don't evade," said Miss Choate.

"There's another ten minutes to go."

Fairfax looked at her.  
Silhouetted against

"How would you bring me down if I was poor?"  
"My dear, your face is your fortune—your face and your pretty ways. You might be poor as blazes, but as long as you stayed single you could dine and dance and sleep in half the ancestral homes of England."

"Sort of second Queen Elizabeth?" said Athalia. "I must be nice."

"Oh, but you are," said Punch. "Most, er, most nice."

"D'you mind speaking the truth?"

Fairfax moistened his lips.

"You are probably the most adorable woman in London to-day. I have never heard anything said of you which you would not have liked to hear. Finally, you are frequently indicated as a

the black of an old bureau, the delicate features looked especially beautiful. The smooth brow, the straight clean-cut nose, the sweet droop of the mouth—from temples to pert chin my lady's face was a picture for men to kneel to.

Her squire covered his eyes.

"Rot it," he said shakily.

"I—I believe I should have a dart."

Athalia permitted herself to smile.

"But if I was poor you wouldn't?"

"No. For both our sakes. . . . Yes—I'm honest. For both. We're earthy, you know. It'd mean that we'd have to come down—come down in the world. Well, I shouldn't like that—I'd hate it. And so would you. And on the top of it all I should always know two things—first, that I'd brought you down, and then that you might have married a richer man."



"The two passed as one through the press."

future Duchess : in fact, if you married me, I believe sterling would drop two stitches—I mean, points.”

“I wish I was poor,” said Miss Choate.

“What would you do?”

Again the lady smiled.

“I should probably marry you,” she said.

“But I shouldn’t’ve asked——”

“I should waive that preliminary,” said Miss Choate calmly.

So soon as he could speak—

“You forward girl,” said Fairfax. “You wicked——”

“And you,” continued Athalia, “not having had any say in the matter, would go up the steep and narrow path to heroism—touching the ground in spots. I should see to that,” she added darkly.

Fairfax wiped his brow.

“Oh, the vixen,” he said. “Listen at her.”

“As it is,” said his companion, “though my feet are of clay—‘earthy,’ I think, was your expression—the man who marries me must think them of fine gold.”

Fairfax looked down his nose.

“There are plenty of coves,” he said, “who’ll tell you the tale. Besides, when I said you were earthy, I only meant ‘human.’ Hang it, Athalia, if I told you your little feet were golden, you’d tell me to go straight home and sleep it off.”

“Also,” continued Miss Choate, “he must prefer my smile to any comfort that he has ever dreamed of.”

“But I do,” protested her swain. “Infinitely. They’re not in the same street.”

“Rot,” said Athalia. “You love your comfort best every time. My smile doesn’t come off with my pearls. If I was poor, my smile ’ld still be there. But you wouldn’t want it then.”

“Of course I should. And if I was rich, I’d have it. It’s not your money I want, but it is your money we need. I’ve only been honest about it. ‘Love and let live,’ you know.”

“Have you anything,” said Athalia, “but what you earn?”

“Not a bean,” was the cheerful reply. “I had sixty thousand, you know. But I’ve been through the lot.”

“Good,” said my lady. “Look here. Jobs tend to cramp the style——”

“They’re a weariness of the flesh,” sighed Punch.

“—and my husband’s style must not be cramped. If you’ll give up your job, I’ll—I’ll marry you.”

Punch Fairfax sat up, open-mouthed.

“What an’ keep me?”

“I’ll settle two thousand a year on you. That’s twice what you earn.”

There was an electric silence.

Then Punch rose with a laugh.

“Clean, honest and sober,” he said quietly. “I see that I should have added ‘respectable’: but, to tell you the truth, I——”

“Sit down, Punch, me lad,” said Athalia Choate. “Dismount and sit down. You’ve given the answer I wanted. Not that I really doubted, but—one liketo make sure.”

Fairfax regarded her thoughtfully. Then—

“Talk about edgywedged tools,” he said, resuming his seat. “Supposing I’d said ‘D-d-done!’—all quick like, with bulging eyes. . . .”

Athalia laughed.

“I should have found a way,” she murmured. “And now go on—ask me. There’s still five minutes to go.”

“As you please,” said Punch. “Why does one like to make sure?”

“Because, so far as I’m concerned, there are only two starters for the Athalia Stakes—and you’re one of them.”

“Athalia!”

“Wait. I’ll be perfectly straight with you. I’ve had one or two proposals—most women have. But as yet I haven’t had one from . . . the man I love.” Her companion started. “That’s often the way, you know. Perhaps I shall never have it. Many women don’t. . . . But oh”—she laced her slight fingers, set them against her cheek and raised her eyes ecstatically—“oh, I hope I shall, Punch. If you knew what it meant to me! I’d be so awfully happy. . . .”

“Well, I—I hope you will, too,” said Fairfax dismally. “I—I do really. . . . But what are you telling me this for?”

“Because you can help me. You see, he is such a dear, but, though we’re quite good friends, the idea of falling in love with me doesn’t seem to have entered his head. And, if he saw us together, I think it might make him think.”

Fairfax laughed hysterically.

“Excuse my emotion,” he said. “The—the humour of it’s sort of dawning on me—that’s all.”

“‘Humour’?” cried Athalia.

“Humour—‘h’ mute. Let me explain. Only two runners for the Stakes, of which I’m one and the other won’t start. So I’m to show off my paces—play about on the course

and generally show the other what fun running is, and then when it finally dawns on him that if he follows the rails they'll bring him to the post, I'm to—— Well, where do I come in? I suppose I get a lump of sugar and a dazzling smile."

"Perhaps," said Athalia dreamily, "the other'll never start."

Punch set his teeth.

"Does it occur——"

"Perhaps," continued Athalia, "when he does, you'll leave him standing." The man stared. "That's my trouble. I love him desperately now—possibly because he doesn't love me. But, once he's started, you may go right away."

Fairfax fingered his chin.

"D'you really think that likely?"

"It's quite on the cards. At the moment I like you and I love him. So I obviously can't marry you. If once he gets going, I shall see him in quite a new light. And then—why, I mayn't love him at all."

"Are you sure you've got it right?" said Punch. "I mean, these 'ere love-squalls are very tricky. Perhaps you don't really care about either of us. I'm sure you think you do, but perhaps you don't. I remember Dusty Bligh wobbling between Ray Darling, that was, and Monica Pump. Neither of the girls would have been seen dead with him, but that never entered his head. His trouble was that he couldn't decide which to have. It was like a billiard match. In the afternoon Monica 'ld be leading, and in the evening Ray 'ld get her eye in and fairly walk away. It might have been going on now if a widow with three kids hadn't rolled up and pinched the prize."

"Serve him right," said Miss Choate. "But I'm not wobbling. Don't you believe it. If the man I love would only propose to-night, I'd fairly jump at him."

"The devil you would," said Fairfax.

"But he won't," said Athalia sadly. "Don't be afraid." A tender note slid into the fresh tones. "I think he's love-shy. He'll want a lot of leading. And then, as I've said, perhaps it won't be the same."

Punch frowned upon his finger-nails.

"You know, it's all very fine," he said uneasily, "but in the course of this running-up stunt I may get fond of you." He hesitated. Then—"Not soppy, you know, but—but troubled . . . go off my feed and that sort of thing. At the present moment I'm sorry, and there you are: but if I saw a lot of you, as you seem to suggest I should—well, I might easily get distracted.

And then if the other gent comes off I'm carted good and proper, I am."

Athalia shrugged her white shoulders.

"That's your look-out. On the other hand, I may get fond of you. It's a gamble, of course: but so are a lot of things. And I've told you the absolute truth. I needn't have. Not one woman in a million would have. They'd 've played you up all right without putting you wise. And you'd 've blessed or cursed them according as it fell out. But I agreed to be honest—for a quarter of an hour. . . . Incidentally, I see the time's up."

"Make it twenty minutes," said Fairfax hastily.

"Not for worlds," said Athalia with a bewitching smile. She rose and, standing a tip-toe, peered at herself in the mirror above the hearth. "And now, which is it to be?"

Thoughtfully Punch regarded her exquisite form.

Presently the girl turned her head and looked at him over her shoulder.

In silence their eyes met.

At length—

"I feel I'm asking for trouble," said the man, "but I may as well have a dart." He rose, stepped to her side and took her small hands in his. "I don't believe I've an earthly, Athalia dear, but, whatever happens, I'll have been with you a bit, won't I? And—when I'm hungry, I expect I'll be glad of those crumbs."

Miss Choate said nothing.

Fairfax kissed her cool fingers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Six weeks had gone by, through which, so far as his secretaryship permitted, Punch had devoted his time to Athalia Choate. Three days out of five he saw her by hook or by crook. Onenight they danced together, another they dined. Twice, time being hard to come by, they had met before breakfast in the Row. On three out of seven Sundays they had spent the day in his car—a powerful gray two-seater, aged and greedy, but sound and good to look at. The comfort of its rubbed cushions stuck in the memory like that of a glass of old port.

Such attention would not have been possible but for the lady herself. Athalia's parents were dead, and, though she visited America every Autumn, the great mansion in Philadelphia was rented year after year, and its girlish landlord spent nearly all her time within hail of a beloved aunt. The latter had married one of the King's Household. . . . The engagement-book of an

exceptionally attractive heiress, so chaperoned, is apt to be full. But Athalia saw to it that Punch was not crowded out. More. True to the spirit of their contract, the girl never fobbed him off. Whenever he sought her company, she gave it with a quick smile.

house, it was always to big parties, where he was one of a crowd. If she entertained herself, Fairfax was never asked.

That this faintly surprised the latter, the following letter will show. He wrote it to his twin sister, Lady Defoe.



“‘I should have found a way,’ she murmured. ‘And now go on—ask me. There’s still five minutes to go.’”

If his work made their meeting difficult, she helped him to find a way. If he bored her, she never showed it: if another should have stood in his shoes, she gave no sign. Only, though she had her own cars, she never used them once when Fairfax was there. Whatever the night, she came and went by taxi if Punch was to be her squire. And though two or three times he came to her uncle’s

July 18th, 1923.

Dear Judy,

*The worst has happened. I knew it would. I’m off my feed. As gentle a brace of kidneys as ever you saw. . . . I give you my word, I had to cover them up—they stared so reproachfully. Well, it’s my own fault. I walked slap into the cage—Athalia showed me round it: together we looked at the bars.*



And now I can't get out. I tell you I've got it bad. I've got to the mathematical stage—adding up how many hours before I see her again, subtracting so many for sleep and glaring at the balance as if it was a bad debt. Did you ever do that, Judy? And all the time I'm racking my rotten brain. . . . I'm sure it's Beringhampton. I'm positive. He knew her before, of course: but he never sat up and took notice until a month ago. And now—well, Mary's lamb isn't in it. He's always around somewhere—always. I happen to know he loathes racing, but the two days she was at Newmarket there he was. I must admit he's good-looking—I think he's the best-looking man I ever saw. But he's a queer-tempered cove. And I'm sorry if he's the man—as he surely is. You see, Judy, no one else fits. If you asked me to find a fellow who needed a lead, who didn't know his own mind, who'd keep on staring at a strawberry and thinking what a whopper it was without it entering his head that he might as well pick it—I should shout 'Beringhampton.' Everyone would. Oh, of course it's him. 'The man I love.' Aren't women funny? Of course I may be wrong. There's plenty of other lads all over Athalia; but they're not hard up for ideas. They don't need any pushing: most 'ld look a bit better with four-wheel brakes. Again, it may be someone who hasn't stripped: but, if it is, they're lying devilish low. I tell you I've racked my brain. . . . But whoever it is has done me in all right—mucking about like this. Hang it, they must love her, unless they've got tea in their veins. You've only got to see her for that. Then what's their mouth for? And while they're boggling, I'm being broken up. . . . And there you are. If somebody said 'All right: they shall speak to-night,' I'd knock his face through his head. I love my tenter-hooks. You know—the 'sweet sorrow' stunt. I tell you, Judy, I'm on the edge of poetry. I want the business finished and I don't want it finished. I don't know what I want. Yes, I do. I want Athalia. I want her as I never wanted anything before. I thought I wanted her six weeks ago. 'Want?' I didn't know what the word meant. I'm absolutely mad about her, Judy. I don't let her see it, you know, but when she appears I have to hold on to something or I'd be jumping up and down. Her eyes, her hair, her blessed mouth—why, her little mouth 'ld make most women, wouldn't it? You do like her, don't you? Of course I know you do, but just say so in your next letter. Just make up something nice and shove it in. It'll be like a drink to me. . . . Well,

I don't know what's to happen. We never fixed a time-limit, so this may go on for months. Sometimes I feel I can't bear it—only last night I very near had it all out. But then, if I do and she thinks the other cove's warming up, everything'll be queered: I shall be fired on the spot and my precious pretty bubble'll become, as they say, disintegrated. Whereupon I shall seek the water under the earth. . . . At other times I'm afraid—terrified, Judy old girl, that the very next time I see her she's going to say 'He's won,' and wring my hand and thank me for working Beringhampton up to the scratch. You see, she's no idea that she's shortening my life. She knows I'm out to marry her, but she doesn't dream that I'm nearly off my head. I hide it all right, you know. Most casual, I am. And when she isn't looking, I kiss her blessed gloves. . . .

She doesn't ask me to dinner. That shows how little she knows. Of course she'd ask me if she thought I'd care to come. It just doesn't occur to her, Judy. I admit she asks Beringhampton—at least, she did last time. . . .

I suppose you couldn't write and suggest that she came to Biarritz. Wrap it up, you know. Say the bathing's a treat, and it's the first time you've been warm since the War, and all that sort of wash. You see, I can get leave in August, and what more natural or pious than that I should come and see you? Incidentally, that 'ld show us whether Beringhampton means business. If he follows her to Biarritz, he simply must speak.

So long, Judy love,

Punch.

P.S.—Of course, it may be all over before August. I don't think B.'s going strong, but, except for Sundays, I never see her by day. From ten to six he's got the course to himself. These cursed idle rich. . . . I tell you I'm seeing the Labour point of view.

P.P.S.—What an histoire this letter is! I've just been reading it through, and it's shaken me up.

I'm coming unbuttoned, Judy. Poor old Punch is coming unbuttoned at last.

Seven days later Miss Choate confided to Fairfax that she had heard from Judy.

"Not my twin-sister?" said Punch, with a daring display of amazement.

"The same," said Athalia. "Why shouldn't I hear from her?"

"No reason at all," said Punch, "except that she never writes. I've had six letters from her since she was married—that's seven years ago. Mole says she's a vegetarian—thinks it cruel to use ink, but, speakin' as



one who's known her all her life except the first twenty minutes, I incline, as they say, to the view that she's labour-shy. What does she say?"

"Suggests that I come to Biarritz. By way of inducement she adds: *The bathing's a treat, and it's the first time you've been warm since the War, and all that sort of wash.*"

Mentally Fairfax consigned Lady Defoe to a resort where the warmth would be still more remarkable.

"Must be losing her mind," he said shortly. "What 'wash'?"

"Can't conceive," said Miss Choate innocently. "Never mind. The point is, shall I go?"

"Why not?" said Punch. "It's about the only place in Europe I know where you can bathe in comfort without a fleece-lined wet-off bathing-suit and a sealskin towel. I shouldn't faint with surprise if I rolled up there myself. I want to see Judy, and my leave starts on the sixth."

"I'm not sailing till the end of September, said Athalia musingly, "so I could put in a month. I must confess I'd rather like to get warm. When's your Bank Holiday?"

"Sixth of *août*," said Punch. "I should give that a miss."

"If I went on the fourth . . ." She sighed. "At least, it'll be a change. After all, Life's rather like a frock. If it's to be a success, you must see it from every angle. Besides, to tell you the truth, I think it'd be a good move—my suddenly leaving the stage. Nature abhors a vacuum."

Fairfax's heart stood still.

After an awkward silence—

"Is—is he showing any signs of life?" he said uncertainly.

Athalia looked away.

"I—I think so," she whispered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Upon being approached, Sir Charles Grist could see no reason at all why his secretary's leave should not commence at five on Sunday afternoon instead of at twelve o'clock on Sunday night.

It was therefore eight-thirty o'clock of a pleasant August evening when the old gray two-seater slid through the streets of New-haven and down to the idle quay.

Two other cars were waiting to go aboard. One was a green cabriolet with red wire wheels.

Fairfax knew it at once—and stopped in his tracks.

It was an Hispano-Suiza, the property of

a nobleman—that, in fact, of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Beringhampton.

For a moment or two Punch stared at the equipage. Then he took out his case and lighted a cigarette.

"They're off at last," he said. "After seven weeks at the gate, at last they're off. . . . If I wasn't a blinkin' fool, I should turn round and drive straight back. As it is . . ." He shifted uneasily. "Burn it all, why shouldn't I have a run? Why shouldn't I have it out before he comes—get there and have it out? An' tell her he's coming an' then push gracefully off? I've nothing to lose, and I'd like her to know how much I really care." He sat up suddenly. "By George, I will. When she knows he's really off, perhaps she won't—" He stopped short there, took off his hat and carefully wiped his face. Then he put on his hat, adjusted it carefully, thrust his cigarette between his lips, and folded his arms. "The art of Life," he announced, "is to keep one's bullet head. If I go, it's simply because I've got nothing to lose."

As the A.A. man came up—

"Last on the boat, first off—am I right?" said Fairfax.

"You are, sir."

"Then put me on last, please."

"I will, sir."

Punch handed over his papers and sought for a drink.

As he passed into the hotel, Beringhampton came out.

"Hullo," said Fairfax cheerfully. "Come and have another."

The other stared.

"Are you crossing?" he said.

"I am that," said Fairfax, "complete with automobile. Destination, B-B-B-Biarritz—where the rainbow ends."

"What are you going there for?"

"Pleasure," said Punch shortly. "And you?"

For a moment Beringhampton looked him in the face. Then the peer's eyes fell to the mat at his feet.

"I never talk," he said. "I never talk."

He spat the words rather than spoke them.

"All right," said Fairfax, laughing. "But come to the harbour bar and have a—"

"'S rotten bad form to laugh," flashed Beringhampton, and went his way.

Fairfax looked after him.

"The man's mad," he murmured. "Staring mad. Face like a Greek god, an' a kink in his brain. . . . And to think she

thinks she loves him!" He raised his eyes to heaven. "Oh, where's the bar?"

That night in his cabin Fairfax remade his plans.

Between Dieppe and Biarritz lay five hundred and twenty miles. He had intended to stay one night on the road and had chosen Tours as his lodging. From Dieppe to Tours the distance was two hundred miles. Thus, travelling at ease, he would have come to Biarritz on Tuesday afternoon.

His meeting with Beringhampton had altered everything.

Generally, it suggested that any avoidable delay should be avoided. Specially, it emphasised the desirability of extreme haste, first, because Beringhampton would naturally propose to reach Biarritz before the gray two-seater, and, secondly, because the Hispano-Suiza was far and away the faster car.

Punch knitted his brows.

The boat would reach Dieppe at four a.m. : with luck his car could have passed the Customs and be actually on the road at five o'clock : and then—five hundred and twenty miles. . . .

Rejecting travellers' tales in favour of the report of personal experience, Punch decided that if he could maintain an average of thirty-five miles an hour he would do extremely well. If he allowed two hours for meals and rest, that would bring him to Biarritz by ten o'clock. To shave, bathe, change and locate Athalia would take the best part of an hour. Eleven o'clock. Punch wrinkled his nose. Mercifully Miss Choate kept late hours . . . mercifully. . . . And this was assuming that he ran to time.

With a sigh, Fairfax took out tobacco and lighted a pipe.

By what hour the Hispano-Suiza could reach Biarritz he deliberately declined to calculate. The answer could do no good and would be discouraging. Given a car which can average fifty upon the open road, and a chauffeur to take the wheel when you feel tired. . . . But then who was to say that Beringhampton would go straight through? Besides . . .

Fairfax folded his map and took off his collar and shoes. Then he lay down on the seat and wished for the day.

This came in due season, fresh and cloudless : but other things first—the port of Dieppe, for instance, and shouts and clangings of the telegraph.

A press of miserable passengers, cold, heavy-laden, white-faced, squeezed and

fought its way towards the steep gangway, stumbled up the rude slope, clattered over setts and metals and swarmed nervously into a grisly Custom House, there to protest despairingly that it had 'nothing to declare.' Blue-jerseyed porters, frantic with excitement, panted and screamed and staggered under stupendous loads. A steam-crane swung to and fro about its business, responding with an uncanny intelligence to the medley of confused directions constantly hurled at its cab. Trucks, seemingly designed for uproar, bumped and rumbled and crashed from quay to platform, their governors bawling for '*Attention*' in a monotonous drawl. A man in charge of a refreshment-waggon was crying his wares : another shouted recurringly that the train would not depart for thirty minutes and urged the prudence of a meal at the buffet : a boy was dismally chanting the names of newspapers : a porter who had lost his patrons was howling "*Soixante-dix*" : four Frenchmen were arguing explosively about 'summer time' : a terrier was barking like a fiend : over all, the deafening roar of escaping steam strengthened the resemblance of the scene to the evacuation of Hell. As if to clinch its identity, here and there stood the cloaked and hooded figures of Authority, motionless, silent, indifferent to the bustle and hubbub, smoking contemptuously, sinister, lynx-eyed. Their deliberate detachment from struggling humanity, their sullen observance and studied disregard of a thousand needs, were arguing a stony misanthropy, malicious, Satanic.

Fairfax watched and waited with an eye on the clock. So did Beringhampton. The latter's chauffeur had a very bad time. It was not, of course, his fault that the officials declared their intention of disembarking the cars as they came. Neither, indeed, was it his fault that, when the cars were ashore, a certain necessary officer was not forthcoming. Yet he paid for this, as did the A.A. man—generously. The idea of waiting till seven did not appeal to Beringhampton—nor, for the matter of that, to Punch, either. Still, the latter kept his temper and cursed with a smile on his lips. . . .

While Beringhampton stalked off the quay in search of a lodging, Fairfax took off his coat and went over his car. Not so the Marquess' chauffeur. After asking Punch if he could be of any assistance, the latter climbed into his charge and endeavoured to sleep. Injustice makes a bad servant. It also may do a rival a very good turn. It

did—that Monday morning. Of the five cars to be cleared the gray two-seater was the first inspected and the Hispano-Suiza the fifth. Beringhampton raged. Then a tire was found flat, and the wheel had to be changed. . . .

While Punch was clear of Dieppe by seven-fifteen, it was half-past eight ere the other took the road.

A start of fifty miles was not to be sneezed at, but the ghastly delay of more than two hours had altered everything. Fairfax knew in his heart that his chances of reaching Biarritz upon the right side of midnight were very small. If he could average forty the whole of the way, well and very good. Otherwise, any interview he might have with Athalia would take place the following day. She kept late hours, certainly, but not so late as all that. On the other hand, barring accidents, there was no reason at all why a clear eye and a determined arm should not bring the Hispano-Suiza to Biarritz by nine o'clock. The devil of it was that Beringhampton must know that, if he but pleased to hurry, he could have the field to himself. The three hours lost would have been of no use to him. Had he arrived at six, by the time he had changed, Miss Choate would have gone to dress, and thence to dinner. Not till, say, half-past nine would he have had a look-in. And by then Fairfax might have come up to cramp his style. But now, if he pleased, he could have the field to himself. . . .

Punch swore beneath his breath and coaxed the gray two-seater to sixty-two.

He ran into Rouen as clocks were striking eight, and, meeting the river, followed it out of the town.

Past a quarry and up through the rising woods, over the glittering Seine, through Pont-de-l'Arche, by Louviers' precious church, into mitred Evreux, where the broad road splits into a delta of aged streets, up over the railway and on to the rolling plain the gray two-seater flung like a thing possessed.

The first real check came at old Dreux, where it was market day. Horses and cattle and carts lumbered and lurched and sprawled and backed over the pavement, thrusting and being thrust: lorries panted and stormed, insistently demanding passage and finding none: little groups of peasants stood in the fairway, absorbed in discourse, shifting mechanically as the raving traffic pushed its way by: gossiping eagerly, old women plunged and bundled from side to

side, apparently oblivious alike of time and place until dragged from under cartwheels or overthrown by collision: urchins were baiting dogs, set to guard tail-boards: gentle-eyed calves stared over sides of gigs: chickens, pinioned and thrown, eyed the welter with indignant surprise.

Ere he had time to withdraw, Punch was engulfed, and ten precious minutes went by before he was out of the town.

Troubles are gregarious.

Ten miles from Chartres a tire burst.

Fairfax changed the wheel and then, looking over his engine, found that his fan-strap had gone.

It was past ten now and becoming immensely hot. Not to repair the defect there and then would be the act of a fool. Punch shook the sweat from his eyes and sought for a spare. . . .

The sight of Chartres' exquisite spires, rising like toy steeples out of the hazy plain, was comforting, but his relentless wrist-watch and the thought of a useless tire jabbed viciously at Fairfax' nerves. He could not make up his mind whether to stop at Chartres and fit a new tire or to take what risk there was and go his way. As he swept up the boulevards he decided to stop for water and nothing else.

He must pass the *Place des Epars* and he knew a garage was there. . . . The next moment he saw its pump. He drew up to the gap in the kerb with a swift rush. . . .

While they were drawing water, he ran across the *Place* and purchased a pie. The *pâtés* of Chartres are famous and a meal in themselves. Then he bought two bottles of Evian and hurried back. He found the mechanic regarding the near fore wheel. There was a gash in the cover through which you could see the tube. . . .

It was a quarter to eleven by the time he was out of Chartres, and Beringhampton passed him five miles beyond Vendôme.

Punch marked his passage mutely, with stony eyes. Then he slid under some trees and took out the clutch. . . .

He broke his fast quickly and then lay down in the grass by the side of the road. He knew what it meant to feel sleepy over the wheel. For perhaps ten minutes he dozed. Then he rose, bathed his face and swung himself into the car. . . .

The road was wicked now—broken to bits. The gray two-seater leaped like a young ram. But Fairfax let her have it and went like the wind. He had nothing to lose. . . .

The broken road took its toll, and when

he slid into Tours, one of his wings was flapping and his number-plate hanging by a thread.

He pushed up the *Rue Nationale*, to see Beringhampton's colours crawling ahead.

With a hammering heart, Fairfax drew very close. . . .

As he slipped by he glanced round.

The chauffeur saw him and smiled and touched his hat. Except for him at the wheel, the car was empty.

Punch pulled into the side, and the other slowed up.

"Where's his lordship?" said Fairfax.

The man's lips tightened.

"He's just taken the train, sir."

"Why?"

"We 'ad a very near shave, sir, a mile or two back." He passed his hand over his eyes. "As near to death as ever I want to be." He paused. Then he burst out. "I've given 'im notice, sir. I've only got one life. If they mark a bend over 'ere, you can bet it's a turn and a 'alf. I pointed 'im out the sign, but 'e didn't care. . . . An' a steam-roller waitin' the other side." He wiped his face. "I thought we was done, I did. . . . When we was through, I told 'im I'd leave 'im at Tours. 'E asked me if I was afraid, an' I said Yes, I was. 'Then drive,' says he. 'An' be cursed an' 'ounded,' says I, 'till I can't think straight? Not much, my lord,' I says. 'I'll leave at Tours.' When we got 'ere 'e drove to the station an' asked if there was a train. . . . Some train was there—movin' . . . They 'auled 'im in and I pushed 'is dressing-case up. 'Deliver the car,' he cries, an' there you are."

"What filthy luck!" cried Punch, half to himself. "What filthy luck!"

The man looked at him curiously. Then he glanced at the car.

"You're coming to pieces, sir. Are you going far?"

"Biarritz," said Punch.

The fellow glanced at his clock.

"I suppose you'll be needin' your car, sir, or I—I could give you a lift."

Fairfax's heart leaped. Then he shook his head.

"I can't use his car," he said.

"It isn't 'is car," cried the man. "'E sold 'er a week ago—sold 'er to Mr. Fairie. 'E's at St. Johndylose. An' as 'e was goin' to Beeritz,' his lordship made the offer to bring 'er out." He dived at a pocket. "Why, 'er papers an' all's in Mr. Fairie's name."

"Mr. Fairie of Castle Charing?"

"That's right, sir. Is he a friend of yours?"

"I should think he was," shouted Fairfax. "But I say—I want to move."

The chauffeur smiled.

"She'll move, sir. D'you know the way?"

"I do. D'you want any petrol?"

"I was just going to fill the tank, sir."

"I know a garage here. You follow me."

Ten minutes later the faithful gray two-seater had been worthily bestowed, the Hispano-Suiza's tank had been filled to the brim and Fairfax had taken his seat beside her driver.

As they moved off—

"She's better nor any train," said the latter shortly.

If the surface was none too good, at least the way was straight and the road open. The reaches became gigantic: after each bend you could see for miles ahead. The traffic, too, was negligible. It was, indeed, the exception not to have the road to yourself.

With the roar of a lion, the great car leapt at her prey. . . .

Time and again the illusion of the frantic approach of things stationary was almost irresistibly real. Time and again, when the road rose and fell, the sensation of using a switchback was painfully acute. Time and again, as they passed another vehicle, the fierce cuff of uproar made Fairfax wince. Time and again pace dislocated sight and left the brain fumbling.

Villages sprang into being out of flat places: a huddle of distant dots shivered into a town: as for the eternal trees beside the road, they seemed no further apart than a ladder's rungs.

The windscreen was open, and the warm air tore at their ears: the thunder of the engine became a stock background of resonance against which other sounds stood up as against silence: it seemed that hearing was going the way of sight.

Presently came Poitiers.

They skirted the ancient city and streaked up the Ruffec road.

Punch began to wonder what time Beringhampton would arrive. If it was the Spanish Express which he had caught, he might, he reckoned, reach Biarritz by seven o'clock. That meant that at eight o'clock he could take the field—not a very convenient hour, but better than nine. Oh, infinitely better than nine. And if Athalia could help, of course she would. He had only to send up

a note and ask her to give him ten minutes before she dined. . . .

Punch began to construct the interview with narrowed eyes, and presently, being very tired, he fell asleep.

The chauffeur roused him, to point to a fine old city piled up on a hill.

Fairfax could only stare.

It was Angoulême.

They swept the hem of her garment and on to the Bordeaux road.

It was during this lap most of all that the burden and heat of the day made themselves felt. The sun seemed to know that they were fighting with Time and to take up the cudgels upon his captain's behalf. The fury of light and heat punished them mercilessly, scorching their faces, keeping their eyes hooded and making the muscles of their eyelids ache hideously with the strain. But the chauffeur never complained or slackened speed. The man understood well enough that Fairfax and Beringhampton were riding some race, and the memory of the stripes which the latter had laid upon him made him strain every nerve to bring the former home. Punch was certainly well horsed. The fellow knew his engine inside out: besides, he had done some racing and remembered the tricks of the trade.

There were times when the car swept like a blast of the wind: at others she whizzed like a shell shot out of a gun: now she swooped and sailed like a ranging gull, and now she soared up a hill with the rush of a lift: and once, on a good piece of road, for three long minutes she seemed to be standing still, heaving gently like a ship riding at anchor, while five miles of the countryside slid into and out of sight.

They ran into Bordeaux at a quarter to six.

There they took in petrol and ate and drank. And Fairfax called for a time-table and studied it while he fed. He might have spared his labour. The table was two years old, and the pages he needed were gone.

They were in the car again by six o'clock.

There was pavement to come now—some of it pretty bad. Who went by Salles avoided the very worst—and tacked ten miles on to his journey. Fairfax went by Salles: it was not his car.

He had his reward.

The sun had retired now and was well on their right: the air was cooler, and a faint tang of salt hung in its breath: the blessed evening was coming to ease their progress.

Fairfax never forgot that last long stretch.

The sun was going down, and the shadows were growing long, and distance was creeping close. Ahead and on either hand the countryside was gone: Earth seemed to have thrown back to the days before she was tamed: Nature ran wild. Forest and furze and broom had the world to themselves. And the car shore them in two as a draper's scissors shear stuff—league after shining league, with a steady snarl. Twice they met a lorry and three times a touring car and twenty carts, perhaps, in nearly a hundred miles. . . .

They swept through St. Geours with twenty-five miles to go.

They dropped down into Bayonne, slipped across the Adour, swung to the right at cross-roads, and followed the tram-lines out.

They had to go slowly then, for the road was narrow and full. Still, they edged their way along, passing when there was room.

They floated into Biarritz at twenty-five minutes past eight. . . .

There was no room at the Carlton, but Lady Defoe was there, so they promised to squeeze Punch in.

As a porter picked up his suit-case—

"All right, sir?" queried the chauffeur.

The eagerness of his tone touched Fairfax' heart.

As he gave him a note—

"Thanks to you—yes," he said, smiling.

"Good-night—and many thanks."

It would have been brutal to tell him anything else.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last Punch found Athalia, by going from pillar to post. She was staying at the *Palais*, had dined out and come back to dance.

They danced a few steps. Then he led her out of the ballroom and into the August night.

"What is it?" she said.

"He's here somewhere. Has he spoken?"

Athalia looked away.

"Not yet," she said slowly. "Not yet, but—I think he will . . . any moment, now."

Fairfax stared at the sea lazily shifting to and fro and the line of miniature breakers curling and roaring as gently as sucking doves.

He had done it—achieved his purpose. It seemed impossible that only that morning he had stood on the quay at Dieppe and

gone over the car.  
Yet he had done  
so—that morning.  
And now—here  
he was at Biarritz.  
And there was  
Athalia looking  
at him with steady

"What is it, Punch? You didn't start  
a day early to ask me that."

"I didn't start a day early."

A puzzled look came into the great brown  
eyes.

"But you can't have——"

"Yes, I did," said Fairfax. "I  
got to Dieppe this morning and came  
down by road. I started from there

at seven and got here  
at half-past eight."

Athalia stared.

Then she caught at  
his arm.

"Punch, Punch!  
You might have broken  
your neck! Why—  
why did you come so  
terribly fast?"

The man hesitated.

"Why?" breathed  
Athalia.

Punch swung round  
and caught her hands  
in his.

"Will you forgive  
me if I tell you?"

"I've asked you  
to."

"Why, then,  
it's because I had  
to—had to get here  
and see you before  
he came. I  
couldn't  
stand by,  
Athalia,  
and watch  
you step out  
of my life  
without a  
word. I'm

"Punch, Punch! You might  
have broken your neck! Why—  
why did you come so terribly  
fast?"

eyes. And Beringhampton had not spoken.  
... He was—in time.

The tragedy of it was *he had nothing to say.*

There *was* nothing to say. He had meant  
to 'have it out.' He had torn across  
France like a madman to 'have it out.'  
Have what out? There was nothing to  
have out. Athalia had said as much. ...  
*any moment, now.* ... In the face of that,  
how could he——

He began to wonder whether such a giant  
fool's errand had ever been run before.

Athalia was speaking.



mad—crazy about you. I can't think of anything else. When I'm not with you everything's dull and flat, and the only way I get through is by thinking of what you look like and how soon I'll see you again. Your hair, your eyes, your temples, your precious, darling mouth—I know every tiny look of them. If I could paint, I'd paint your portrait from memory without a slip. I know your hands and the shape of your tiny nails, and I'd know your step from a million if you were going by. Oh, my lady, I do love you so. I thought I did when I asked you to be my wife, but I didn't at all. I hadn't begun to love you. But now . . . Oh, Athalia, my sweet, I've tried to play the game. You don't know what it's meant to sit by your side in the car and see your face at my shoulder and hold my tongue. I've had to hold on to myself to keep my head. When I said that but for your money I wouldn't have opened my mouth, I must have been mad. If you hadn't a bean—why, I'd go across Europe on my hands and knees and beg and pray you to let me 'bring you down.' Yes, I've got to that, my lady. Bringing you down or no—I'd beg and pray. You see, I've turned selfish. You've come to mean too much, and that's the truth." He stopped

short there. Then he let fall her hands and turned to the sea. "And there you are, sweetheart—I can call you that this once. You asked me why I hurried, and now you know. If he'd spoken before I got here, I couldn't have told you this. And I felt I wanted you to know. That's all. I just wanted you to know . . . how very much . . . I cared."

For a moment the girl said nothing.

Then—

"I'm glad you did," she said gently, "awfully glad. And now I'll tell you a secret. The Athalia Stakes have been won."

"Won!"

"Won. Listen. The result was a dead heat."

Fairfax started.

"But you said he hadn't spoken."

"I know. Never mind. He has. And you've dead-heated—you and . . . the man I love."

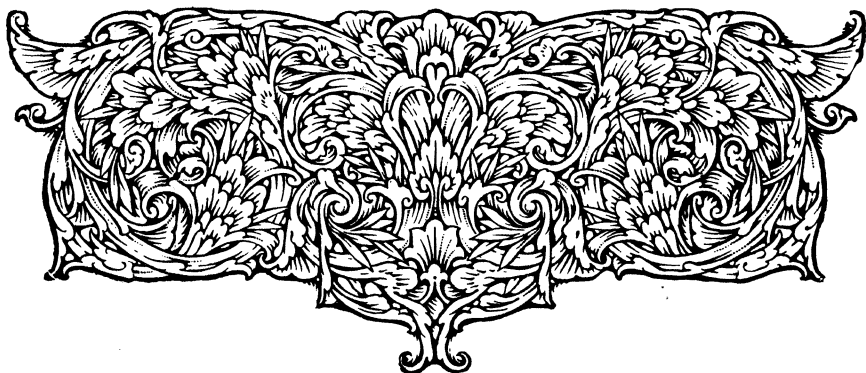
Punch put a hand to his head.

"Well, here's a go," he said. "What do we do now? You can't marry us both."

With a half-laugh, half-sob, Athalia slid her arms round his neck.

"Yes, I can, my darling. You see, you're both called Punch."

*Another complete story by Dornford Yates will appear in the next number.*



# THE SECRET OF DRIVING

By BERT SEYMOUR

*Winner of "The News of the World" Tournament, 1921, the Croydon and District Professional Alliance Cup, 1920, and the Essex Championship Cup, 1922*

*(In a chat with Clyde Foster)*

*Illustrated from action-photographs by Percy G. Luck for which Bert Seymour himself has posed.*

**Y**OUR first inclination is to drive the ball a long way. Well and good. I humour you to the extent of watching your maiden effort. Perhaps you will make a good drive, most probably in the wrong way.

That is golf all over. Occasionally good results are obtained by wrong methods. I should almost prefer to see you start with a bad shot, because it is too much to expect that the first swing you make at golf should be a perfect swing. However, supposing you have made a good drive, I do not discourage you. On the contrary, I invite you to try again, feeling sure that you will have inwardly resolved to do still better. If you have driven 180 yards, why should you not drive 200 yards? That is what you will be saying to yourself. And that is what will very soon bring you to a realisation of the danger of pressing.

## PRESSING.

I wish you could have escaped making the acquaintance of that arch-enemy of all golfers—pressing. Even those of us whose calling in life it is to play golf, and do little else, frequently find ourselves making the same mistake as the generality of golfers—straining and pressing for an additional ten or fifteen yards, which is hardly worth having at any time, and is attended by great risks every time it is tried for.

We have not spent many minutes together before the conviction takes possession of your mind that the making of one good shot is no guarantee of the making of another, until such time as you know how the good shot is made and consequently can be made again.

There is one good quality about the first good shot you have made. I am assuming that you have started with a long straight drive. The good quality to which I refer is the confidence and absence of restraint with which you made the shot.

Possibly golf seemed to you easy as you looked at the stationary little ball elevated on a small pyramid of sand, waiting to be driven into space as far as you could drive it with a club built for the purpose, which may have felt very comfortable to your hands. It will be fortunate for you if the driver should continue to feel equally comfortable all through the golf games that lie before you.

I think it was an American humorist who spoke of golf as a game played with a ball and implements singularly ill-adapted to hitting it. One day you may discover that there was more than humour in that American's description.

Well, now, you have tried to make a second shot still better than your first, longer, at any rate. Golf drives are too often judged on the score of length. I prefer to judge them—though I must confess to being a long driver—rather for their type than for their length. That is what I want to instil in your mind.

Your second shot, instead of being longer than the first, was neither so long nor so straight, solely because you put more brawn than brain into it. The little ball declined to fly far and sure at the instance of an ill-timed "wallop." That meant surprise number one for you, and I hope the lesson will be taken to heart. I humour you no further, but take you strictly in hand, as I try to lay sound foundations for your golf.



So now, then, give up the idea of hitting till such time as you can safely take a few liberties, for hitting is a liberty that few can take to their advantage. I do not, of course, mean to place you under eternal restraint. I only want to set you going in the right way first of all, and by slow but sure degrees—no slower than is necessary—bring you on.

Pray bear in mind that for the time being I am your master. Unless we stand in this relation one to the other, little good can come of our meeting; and great good must come to you if you will do as you are told. It may be hard for you, it may go against the grain to have your individuality interfered with in this way, but as you have

come for a lesson, it is not too much to ask that you shall receive it.

Some pupils of mine have told me that after an hour's instruction they have made a faithful note of what I said to them, lest they should forget and so profit little by their lesson. I like pupils of that description. They generally do a professional credit. It is not good for one's reputation as a teacher that pupils should go elsewhere and say that their golf shows no signs of improvement. Yet it is quite a common thing for people to come to me saying that, as a consequence of taking lessons elsewhere, they lost what little golf they had. I should not like them to go "elsewhere" and tell the same sad story of the baneful

effects of my tuition upon them. To all such I must honestly declare that one reason why instruction puts them off their game for a time is that their styles require drastic overhauling and considerable patience on their part in getting rid of bad habits which have become almost second nature to them.

#### BREAKING BAD HABITS.

Bad habits, once formed, are difficult to shed. They keep cropping up when one is off one's guard. For this reason it is necessary to concentrate on every shot so that it should be made exactly as you know it ought to be made.

I shall have a good deal to say later on about concentration, for that is the quality which makes all the difference between one golfer and another in the higher grades of the game. I have taken part in many great tournaments and open championships, and well I know that it has been due to lapses in concentration that my cards have frequently been spoiled, especially on the putting greens, where some of us are tripped up who are otherwise about equal.

I do not wish to be



ADDRESSING THE BALL WITH SQUARE STANCE.

*The hands are overlapped and work together as one.*

laboriously technical, because I am strongly of the opinion that too much theorising about golf has brought distress into thousands of minds. For the present we are concerned only with the driver, the king of clubs in the golfer's bag.

You do not need to be reminded of the value of long straight driving and the danger of long crooked driving. It is a good thing to get well away from the tee, provided the ball keeps to the fairways. It is not given to everyone to be able to recover from the rough as a powerful golfer like Ray can. We always say of him that it matters little where he puts the ball, as he can find a way to the green as soon as anybody, regardless of whether he pulls or slices his tee shots. Men who drive so far as he does contribute greatly to the attractiveness of golf, and his recovery shots are even more wonderful still.

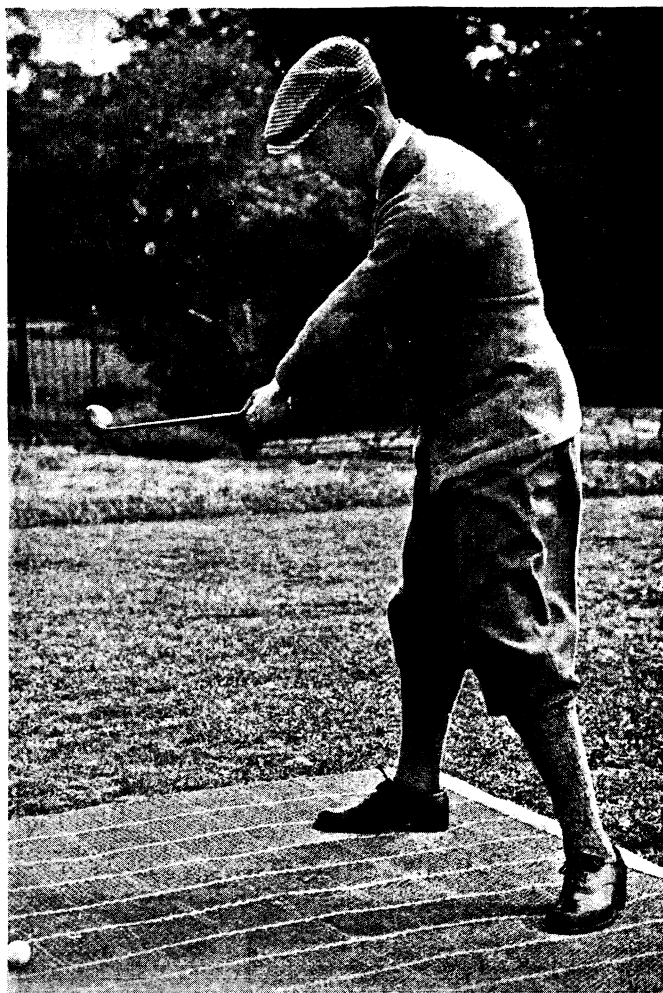
I want to make you drive straight. That, after all, is the correct thing to do, and the way to do it I shall now make clear to you.

If you will free your mind from all thought of length, I shall show you how a good and useful length is obtained without the penalties of getting into the rough. You will first resolutely make up your mind that it is easy to keep straight, as, indeed, it is when that is all you are thinking about. Yonder is the fairway, stretching clean and clear towards the green.

#### POSITION OF THE FEET.

In making the drive it is of prime importance to stand correctly, as if the feet are wrongly placed good driving is impossible.

Some teachers advise the placing of the left foot a little behind the right foot. Others advocate the placing of the left foot a little in front of the right foot, so as to impart what is called a pull to the



BEGINNING OF SWING.

*Left arm going straight back and left heel just coming off the ground as the right leg stiffens.*

ball, with the object of making it run farther after it pitches.

I teach beginners—and all others, in fact, except in special circumstances—to stand square to the ball. By this is meant that the toes of both feet are in such relation that a line drawn from one to the other could be continued straight, like a telegraph wire, through the pin that flutters in the distance on the green.

By standing in this square way the balance of the body is more easily maintained, and the ball is less likely to fly off to the right or to the left. It should go straight down the fairway when the shot is well-timed.

The ball must be so placed that it will be



TOP OF SWING.

*Club horizontal: eyes looking over left shoulder at the ball: left wrist falling into striking position under the shaft: right elbow slightly out from the body.*

slightly nearer the left heel than the right heel. In fact, a line drawn at right angles from the ball towards the body would pass the left heel about six inches off.

When these directions are attended to, the foundation has been made for good driving, with the toes pointing outwards as a person would naturally stand to hit a stationary object with a club. It is a great matter that one should feel natural and comfortable about the stance. Herein lies one of the simple charms of golf—that it is played along natural lines.

#### THE MOST SUITABLE CLUB.

Whether the clubs shall be light or heavy, long or short, stiff or supple, depends on considerations which it is the tutor's

business to take account of. A person with very short arms will probably swing better with a long club, just as a person not gifted with strong wrists will play best with light clubs.

The length of the driver varies from forty to about forty-three and a half inches, which is very long. The hands should take hold of the club two inches from the end. In this way the balance of the club is better felt and greater control over the ball is possible. When the club is gripped at the very end, the head is apt to fly too much in front of the shaft.

#### THE TEE.

The beginner usually likes to have the ball tee'd high. It then seems to him more easy to hit. But high tees are a mistake. There is always the danger of the club-head passing under the ball when it is too much cocked up. Good golfers are content to use very little sand in building their tees. It is sufficient that the ball should be raised just clear of the ground.

#### ADDRESSING THE BALL.

In addressing the ball the club-head must be laid behind it on its sole, the whole of which should rest lightly on the ground. It is a mistake to rest the club on its heel, causing the toe to be lifted slightly. Neither should the face of the club be tilted over behind the ball, causing the front of the club to leave the ground.

Beginners often go far wrong in their manner of addressing the ball, with the result that the shot is fozzled one way or another. When the club-head rests behind the ball, just before being taken back at the start of the swing, the hands should be a little behind and the arms and legs in a nice pliable condition. The limbs must not be stiffened, neither should they be too slack. The thing to make sure of is that

the knees and the wrists shall be free to play their all-important part in the shot.

#### THE UPWARD SWING.

First of all, then, take the club back from the ball with the feeling that the left arm is swinging it and the right arm guiding it. For the first three or four feet the club should go back slowly and smoothly, gradually turning in towards the body, on a level with the loins. While this is being done, the head must remain absolutely still and the body be balanced equally on both feet.

The left arm should be almost straight, the idea being to swing the club well out behind in order that the club-head shall come at the ball skimming the ground two or three feet behind and following through on the same plane for about the same distance. The right elbow should be kept well into the side until the first half of the upward swing is completed; it must then move freely out and upwards until the top of the swing is reached.

Having taken the club back in this fashion, the next stage is to swing it upwards and outwards till it lies horizontally across the shoulders without touching any part of the neck or back.

#### THE ARMS AT THE TOP OF SWING.

It is no longer possible, of course, to keep the left arm straight. The elbows now come into the shot. While the right elbow goes outwards from the body, the left elbow is swung inwards and the hands are turned so that at the top of the swing the left wrist falls directly under the club-shaft, while the head of the driver points downwards perpendicularly to the ground like a top.

There is great danger, once the club has been brought to the horizontal, in hurrying it back again

on the downward swing. A slight pause at the top, until one feels sure that the club is well under control, for lashing at the ball will counteract the tendency to begin the downward swing in too great a hurry.

#### THE DOWNWARD SWING.

The club should return to the ball along the same lines as those by which it was swung upwards. If this is kept in mind, the value of it is immediately demonstrated by the clean way in which the ball is hit in the middle of the club. Any jerky departure from this line may lead to the ball being hit with the heel or the toe of the club.

Trouble is often caused by raising the right heel too soon; it should not be lifted



POSITION OF CLUB HALF-WAY ROUND.

*Head still down and eyes on the ball.*

from the ground until the hands have passed the right knee on the downward swing.

The golf drive—and all other shots in golf—should be made smoothly. Anything in the nature of haste is almost certain to introduce jerkiness to the shot. Most probably the hands will be thrown in front of the club-head, thereby converting the shot into a sort of drag. The flick has gone out of it.

The golf ball will play no tricks with you if you play no tricks with it. But if you snatch your club across it, instead of sending the club straight after it, the consequences will be a search for the ball among the gorse or bent on either side of the fairway.

When you have blundered in this way, or in any other way, as by topping the ball and trundling it along the ground, I take you in hand literally. That is to say, I place my left hand on your left shoulder and guide the club-head round with my right hand until that shoulder turns directly over the ball. You are now in a striking position at the top of the swing, with the left wrist under the shaft of the club. I then place my hand on your right shoulder and bring the club through, practically playing the shot for you. You will then feel where the power comes in, and also realise how the face of the club comes straight on to the ball.

#### SWEEPING THE BALL AWAY.

What I want you to do is to sweep the ball away, coming on it with the centre of the club-face swiftly and smoothly, skimming the surface of the ground with the sole of the club. There must be no jarring or jerking of any sort, and it need not be difficult to avoid these things. Nor will it be



POSITION OF DRIVER AND RIGHT HEEL AFTER BALL HAS BEEN DRIVEN.

*Eyes on spot where the ball lay, and right knee beginning to bend.*

found to be difficult if only you will think of nothing but playing the shot correctly.

There is only one sure way to length—I am not talking of colossal length, but reasonable length—and that is to brush the ball away with the centre of the club, chasing it through, as far as the arms will go, in a straight line, without any pushing forward of the hands.

This may not be easily understood in so many words, but try to do what I am inculcating—taking no thought of length—and you will presently experience the delightful sensation of the ball flying off quite a good length without any conscious

effort on your part beyond the correct swinging of the club.

Who is there who cannot recall shots of this description that have been vainly sought for many times afterwards? Did you ever know a golfer who did not frequently speak of wonderfully fine shots made with a minimum of conscious effort, without the semblance of a punch or the application of strength?

It is good to be strong, even for golf, but yet I lay it down as a fact that strength beyond the normal has little or nothing to do with the game. It is doubtless very useful in difficult bunkers, heather, gorse, or thick grass, but why get there? Accidents will happen, we know, but why should they happen so often? Generally speaking, the fairways are wide enough, and it is only the insensate craving for length that works ninety per cent. of the mischief.

The professional tutor has many things to consider while giving a lesson. He may see unlimited possibilities in one pupil and very limited possibilities in another. All the same, he will see in both the possibility of playing the game correctly. Once a pupil knows how to play, he will surprise himself and his friends by his golf.

I cannot make a golfer out of you, even so far as the drive is concerned, in one lesson, but I can start you on the right lines and impose the condition that in no circumstances will you take any liberties with my directions.

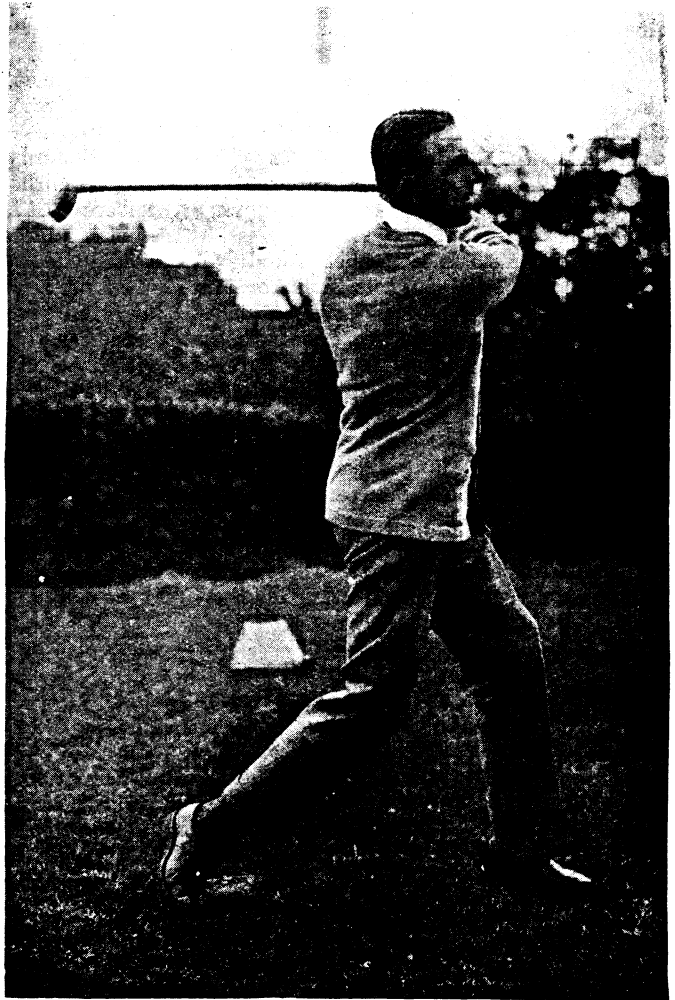
Up to now I may be content to leave you with a half swing so long as that half swing is made in the manner that I or any other professional should make it. The further development of the swing should be found quite easy if you are careful to maintain your balance and to banish all thought of length as the arms and the club go further back in the upward swing.

### THE "FOLLOW-THROUGH."

Bring a little common-sense to bear on what I am trying to tell you.

It must at once appear to you that a golf ball cannot be driven if the head of the club is brought down upon it almost perpendicularly in a chopping fashion. Hence the need, the obvious need, for taking the arms back, well away from the right shoulder or the nape of the neck, so as to bring the club-head along a sort of plane to the back of the ball, sweeping it away. This being done, the club-head will continue to follow-through on that plane, thus imparting a low rising flight to the ball, with consequent distance.

I often stop at stages in a lesson to have a talk with a pupil about the reason for



FINISH OF SWING.

*Both knees bend to permit a free follow-through of right shoulder.*



everything I am telling him, because any instructions I may give will speedily evaporate unless he is brought to see the meaning of it all. "I see what you mean, Seymour," is the sort of remark I like to hear a learner make.

Let it be assumed that you have come so far as to see eye to eye with me regarding the importance of smooth, rhythmic swinging of the club.

#### SWAYING.

We come now to an aspect of the golf swing that is easily understood, but, alas! equally easily forgotten. There must be no swaying of the head or shoulders. The body must twist gently at the hips until the ball can be seen over the left shoulder at the top of the swing, while the head has slightly turned, but still remains in its original position.

When the swing has been completed and the ball has gone well on its way, the right shoulder should come under the chin directly over the spot where the ball lay. The club-head will then have followed through and well out, finishing where the momentum has carried it.

The ideal finish is seen when the club is swung round over the left shoulder and comes to rest almost horizontally. But many great golfers do not trouble to swing the club so far round after the shot is made. All that really matters is that the follow-through shall have been complete.

I sometimes ask a pupil to swing the driver for several minutes at a daisy or any small object that lies at hand. Very often the shot is well played when there is no ball there. The presence of the ball seems to fill most minds with uncertainty. One can get through more work without a ball, as there is no need then to go hunting for it.

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE LEGS.

After the first principles are clearly understood, my object is to weld them all together by showing the functions of the legs. In a general way, the golf drive consists of throwing the weight of the body on to the right leg during the upward swing, and then gradually passing it on to the left leg in the downward swing. This is very easily done, and should be persistently practised.

*But beware of lifting the body or swaying backwards and forwards first on to one leg and then on to the other.*

So long as the club-head leads from the ball all the way to the top of the upward

swing, and then comes down in front of the hands all the way to the ball, everything should go well, unless the head has been lifted or swayed instead of remaining stationary while the body is turned in spiral fashion. This movement cannot be made without pivoting on the left foot to permit of the left knee bending to let the body rotate.

#### PIVOTING.

Pivoting has its uses and its perils. Beginners are apt to pivot so loosely, rising on the tip of the left toe, that they almost spin during the swing. This must be avoided at all costs. The left foot must never be permitted to lose its hold of the ground.

I pivot on the ball of the foot, scarcely raising the heel more than half an inch off the ground. In this way power is imparted to the shot. Obviously, driving is impossible when the player is twiddling on his toe. A champion boxer once told me that the only way to move about the ring was to slither on the feet like a bear and never to get high up on the toe, when only a glancing blow could be delivered. It is so with golf.

The Americans scarcely lift the left heel at all in pivoting. They rock on the near side of the foot to enable them to bend the left knee in taking the club back. This is the best and safest way to pivot. There is no need whatever to lift the heel inches off the ground and so add to the margin of risks in timing the arrival of the club-head at the ball.

#### SOME DRIVING FAULTS AND THEIR CURE.

So common and persistent are some of the faults in driving that I feel no harm can be done if they are here reiterated.

#### SWAYING AND LIFTING THE HEAD.

One of the greatest evils in golf is lifting the head or swaying the body while the club is being taken back. I don't think I've ever undertaken to correct bad habits in anybody without finding either or both of these among them. Ladies are particularly liable to lifting and swaying, in their attempts to add more yards to their tee shots.

These faults are by no means confined to the fair sex. Strong men, with no need whatever to sway in quest of power, are as guilty as the rest of this fatal error. Don't tell me that Ted Ray sways. Ted Ray knows

what he is doing and he can do it. Ray is a professional golfer whose whole life has been given to the game. No man better times a golf ball than he. If he sways a little, this only means that he takes risks, but is able to turn these liberties to his advantage. You cannot do this; anyhow, you must not try. Keep your head still, not as still as a statue, but to all intents and purposes, still—comfortably still, so to speak.

In no circumstances sway, but rather twist the body round, leading with the right hip in taking the club back; and then, after a momentary pause at the top of the swing, bring the body round again as the club-head leads smoothly and swiftly on to the ball, "bang in the middle of its back," as an old professional friend of mine used to say.

The old idea of keeping one's eye on the ball is perfectly sound, as far as it goes. But it often goes much too far. I have seen a pupil fix his eye on the ball so steadfastly that he forgot other things of equal importance.

I could imagine myself giving a series of lessons to a variety of pupils without saying a word about keeping the eye on the ball. Why? Because it is such a perfectly natural thing to do.

I verily believe, though I have never made the experiment, that any ordinary professional could play a round shutting his eyes in the act of striking the ball, having, of course, opened his eyes while taking up his position and addressing the ball.

To be sure, you must not let the eyes wander to right or left. But who would do such a silly thing? The real meaning of keeping your eye on the ball is that you shall not take your eye off by lifting your head. It is the lifting of the head and the eyes with it that constitutes the great radical error.

I suppose golfers are prone to lift their heads in their eagerness to watch the flight of the ball. We all do this sooner or later in the shot. It is the doing of it too soon that works the havoc by bringing the club-head on to the top of the ball instead of letting it come forward to the same position in which it lay when the ball was addressed immediately before starting the backward swing.

I have seen a photograph—of J. H. Taylor, I think—showing the club-head in the act of impact. It then looked exactly as if the player were addressing the ball. The camera was very instructive in that picture.

### LOSS OF DISTANCE.

Suppose you come to me with an urgent, almost pathetic request that I should show you how to add fifteen or twenty yards to your length. In all likelihood I shall not find it necessary to tell you to hit harder. I may even astonish you with the suggestion that you should not hit so hard.

One thing is certain—I shall take pains to see that you bring the centre of the club on to the ball in the correct way, so that the lead at the back of the club-head plays its important part in the shot. You can always tell when a ball is well and truly driven, by the ping or crack of the blow.

Although I am using the word "hit" pretty freely, you will bear in mind the distinction I have previously drawn between hitting and sweeping.

### LOSS OF BALANCE AND TIMING.

When these first principles are carefully followed until they have been thoroughly assimilated, it will be found that good driving is a thing of comparative ease. The speed of the descending club is increased to its highest rate as it passes through the ball without any desperate lunging on the part of the player. It is for this reason that comments are often heard upon the ease with which long drives are made.

Speed comes into the shot as the natural result of making sure that the club-head leads all the way. In other words, as the saying goes, "the club is left to do its own work." This is one of the greatest truths in the game of golf, as every golfer will admit, from the Open Champion to the humblest of players.

There is no delight so great as good driving. However important the other shots in the game are, every golfer will acknowledge that his greatest ambition is to drive well. When professionals play an exhibition match, it is their driving that calls forth exclamations from the public.

### THE TWELVE POINTS OF GOOD DRIVING.

Driving is not difficult if the following main principles are faithfully observed:—

1. Address the ball behind with the club-head resting naturally on the ground, not tilted in any way.
2. Hold the hands a little behind the club-head, which should lead the hands as it is brought away.
3. Begin the upward swing with a stiff left arm so as to get the club well behind the ball.



4. Bend the left knee inwards towards the right knee as the left elbow bends to swing the club over the right shoulder.

5. See that the left wrist falls under the club-shaft at the top of the swing.

6. Go back slowly and smoothly, gripping firmly with the left hand and lightly with the right hand.

7. At the top of the swing let the weight of the body rest on the right leg.

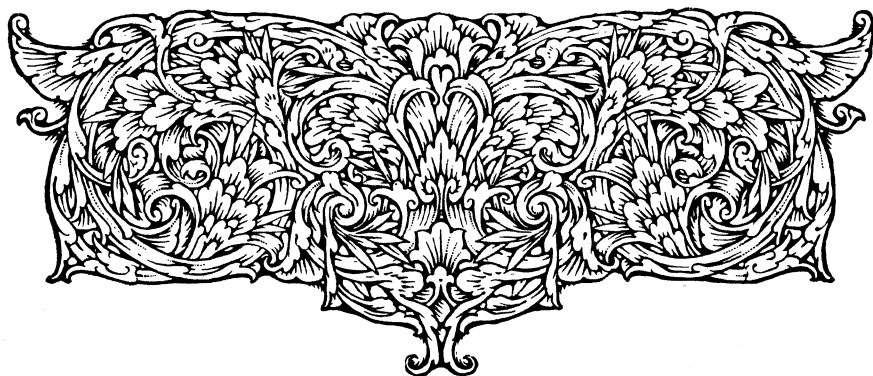
8. In making the downward swing, gradually transfer the weight of the body from the right leg to the left.

9. Pivot on the ball of the left foot as the right elbow and left knee bend for the upward swing.

10. Feel that the left foot still holds firmly to the ground.

11. When the swing has been completed, the left foot should not have moved appreciably from its original position.

12. This, above all—make sure that you bring the club down in the same arc as that by which you brought it upwards.



## MY SONG.

**O**NE day I'll make the world hear a song  
Whereof I shall have joy in the singing;  
The spirit shall move, and carry me along,  
And set me ringing

As if I were a bell in a church tower  
Sounding a tocsin wide about the sky;  
But I shall know great peace in that hour,  
And then—it will pass by.

I shall forget the way I was holden,  
I shall be what I was once again:  
Only the song I made, clear and golden  
And changeless, shall remain.

LEOPOLD SPERO.

# A FAIR FIELD

By JAMES BALLANTYNE

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

IT was the last day of a fortnight of marvellous holiday weather, and the rare sensation of perfect physical fitness made the City clerk feel almost twenty years younger as he breasted the last and steepest part of his annual climb. He went home to Galloway every summer, and one day was always allotted to Scaurgill, from the summit of which he looked down on three kingdoms.

"And to-morrow night I'll be back in Brixton," he said to himself, as he gazed over miles of wild moorland, where there was not even a shepherd's cottage to break the solitude.

At the thought of London he remembered his unopened morning paper, and got down out of the wind to read it while he rested after his climb. The first heading that caught his eye took his breath away again. The firm of shipbrokers with which he had spent all his working life had failed for half a million; the great Cecil Killigrew, his boss, was wanted by the police, had been traced to Glasgow, and was believed to be on board a Greek schooner that had sailed the day before for Valparaiso; and last, but not least, though the paper did not mention it, Tom Boyd was out of a job, and his little all, amounting to three hundred and fifty pounds, had vanished with the rest of the company's capital.

It was a stunning blow for a man close on forty, with a wife and three children to provide for. For more than an hour he sat reviewing the past, with its endless might-have-beens, and trying to reckon the chances of the very uncertain future. All that had exhilarated him as he stood on the windy summit—the pure, keen air, the bright sunshine, the romantic beauty of the wide prospect bounded by the Arran hills and the Irish coast—seemed now only to make him more depressed, as he asked himself why anyone who might have stayed in Galloway could have chosen to spend his life between Brixton and the City. Even Scaurgill, he thought, would never be the

same place again. It had been part of a shooting the Killigrews used to lease, and his father, at that time stationmaster at Arlington, had thought that the boy was made for life when he got him into the office of that old-established firm.

He was roused from these gloomy reflections by a sheep scampering past him, and turned round to see what had disturbed it. And there, a few yards above him, stood Killigrew himself, shading his eyes as if looking for something away out at the entrance to the loch. If Boyd's thoughts had not been so full of his absconding employer, he would very likely not have known him, for he was dressed like a tramp, his face was dirty and unshaven, and the beautifully-trimmed moustache was gone. Almost at the same instant Killigrew saw his late clerk, and saw, too, that he had been recognised.

They faced each other for a long minute without a word, and both did some very hard thinking. It had been Boyd's one consolation that the scoundrel was sure to be arrested at Valparaiso, if he was not stopped before, but now it looked as if the Greek schooner had been merely a ruse to throw the police off the scent. Very likely he had been put ashore during the night, and had all his arrangements made for getting on board another vessel, while the schooner would be scuttled off some convenient coast and in due course would be reported lost with all hands.

Boyd's first impulse was to run like the wind and warn the police. But the nearest village was five miles off, and there was a speck on the loch below that might be a motor boat. By the time the alarm was given and a watch kept on shipping, Killigrew might have got clear away.

"I didn't expect to see you here in that disguise," he said at last.

"Trying the simple life for a change," replied Killigrew. "Nice quiet place for a holiday. Good morning."

With that he marched off, giving the



"He took another look over his shoulder to see if Killigrew was gaining."

clerk a look that plainly dared him to follow. Boyd cursed his luck that the "strong man" was at least a strong man physically, and had been a first-rate boxer—very nearly a Blue, indeed—at the Varsity. And then there was his own badly-damaged left arm, a souvenir of the Great War. That alone made it hopeless to try and arrest a desperate man single-handed.

"I'll stalk him and keep him in sight as long as I can, though," he said to himself. And as he said it he realised that Killigrew, anticipating that move, was taking a line that would bring him over a wide, flat moor, where it would be practically impossible to follow him unobserved. And at the far side of that open expanse, the ground, where it dipped sharply to the Whitburn road,



"He had turned and was running downhill."

was broken up into a maze of little valleys in which, unless he kept close up, he was bound to lose his man. There was just a chance, even on that wild and lonely moorland, that someone might come in sight—Green, the shepherd, or even, by a miracle of good fortune, an exploring visitor. And then, as he was starting to follow Killigrew, he remembered that Green would be at Middleton Lamb Sale for a certainty. But he followed, all the same.

Killigrew at once turned and made for

him, with a face that plainly meant mischief. Boyd's first and natural impulse was to bolt, but he resisted it, and in that moment of crisis the inspiration came. He let Killigrew come within twenty yards of him and then ran, but as soon as his pursuer turned back he was after him again. This time Killigrew walked on till he came to the hollow below the Shepherd's Well; then he made a dash at Boyd, who bolted back towards the summit of Scaurgill. The tactics the clerk had invented to meet his opponent's

assured superiority in a hand-to-hand fight were now to be put to the test. They depended on his being Killigrew's match in speed and stamina, and in the sprint he just held his own and no more. After chasing him for a quarter of a mile, Killigrew wheeled round and made off at a fast trot in the opposite direction. Boyd promptly did likewise, keeping just sufficiently far in the rear to be out of effective range of stones or other missiles.

They travelled nearly three miles in this fashion, running and walking by turns, till Killigrew, who knew the country quite as well as Boyd, halted well out of sight and hailing distance of the Whitburn road.

"This is the last chance you'll get," he said. "If you don't go home now, you won't go home on your own feet."

Boyd needed no reminder of the risks he ran. He knew that a stumble or a twisted ankle would put him in the power of a man who would stick at nothing to render him helpless for many hours to come.

"I'll take my chance," he replied. "It's a fair field and no favour—three square miles of Galloway all to ourselves—my brains against your brains, your grit and stamina and will-power against mine. We'll see who's the better man."

"Very well, then. Run for your life. It's more than three miles to the top of Scaurgill, and uphill all the way. I give you one more chance. Mind you, I'm in dead earnest."

And indeed he was. He pursued with grim, relentless determination, spurring savagely whenever he thought he was gaining, and settling down, when that failed, to a steady, hard slog, which he plainly intended to keep up till he had run the clerk clean off his feet. It was killing work, and Boyd thanked his stars that he was really fit once a year, and that this was the very last day of his fortnight's training. He was now strung up to as high a pitch of desperate resolution as his opponent, and vowed that he would stand the pace at least five seconds longer. Though the firm had had no more loyal worker, he had always disliked the boss's arrogance and uncertain temper and the unbridled extravagance now known to have been criminal. That smouldering feeling had blazed up into a flaming anger, and the wild hope of thwarting the scoundrel in his well-planned scheme for disappearing kept him going long after he was ready to drop. But by the time he was half-way up the last steep rise to the summit of Scaurgill, his head was

swimming, his legs were doubling up under him. He took another look over his shoulder to see if Killigrew was gaining, and found that he had turned and was running downhill at what seemed breakneck speed. It was a shrewd move, for the clerk had now reached the stage when he wanted only to lie down and die. But he set off doggedly in pursuit, and the change from running uphill seemed to give him a new lease of energy. Slowly but surely he began to draw up, and when he got to within forty yards, Killigrew fell in a heap and lay like one dead. Boyd staggered on till he was his regulation twenty yards away, and dropped down among the heather, dead beat, but triumphant, having proved that in staying power as well as in speed he had the measure of his man.

It was nearly an hour before Killigrew rose and began wandering about the moor. He looked like murder all the time, and Boyd felt certain he had a new scheme in his mind. They came at length to the foot of a short but steep slope. Killigrew raced up it and disappeared over the top; Boyd was after him as usual, but instead of running straight up, he made for a point twenty yards to the left. His suspicion was justified. Killigrew had taken cover for a few seconds, and now jumped up with a stone ready to throw, but, finding his man still at twenty yards' range, slipped it into his pocket again. However, he had realised the advantage a missile gave him in broken country, and the next time he tried to escape he gained ground repeatedly at the tops of steep slopes and at the bends of valleys, where the pursuer had to run wide or risk being knocked out. But though he tried frantically hard, he could never shake Boyd off when he ran, or hit him when he took cover and waited, and at last he gave up the attempt and marched back to the Shepherd's Well.

"What about your brains against my brains now?" he asked, as he filled his empty flask.

It was a legitimate retort. There was no other water Boyd knew of within a mile, and he must either go without or lose his man. He thought he could bear his tormenting thirst as long as need be, but it was bound to tell on him, and he would be fatally handicapped when Killigrew was refreshed and ready for another gruelling run.

"You've got me this time," he replied, and, as if accepting defeat, set off walking

rapidly in the direction of Arlington. A couple of hundred yards took him out of sight. He doubled back on the other side of the ridge and crawled up till he could see without being seen. It was not long before Killigrew left his flask and sandwiches by the well, and made for a point that would give him a view in the direction his late pursuer had taken. Boyd turned his back to him, then jumped to his feet, yelling and waving like a madman, and Killigrew did not wait to see who it was he was summoning.

Boyd tore down to the well, filled the flask, trampled the sandwiches into the bog, and gave chase. He made no further pretence of having reinforcements behind him, but Killigrew ran for a mile before he began to think he had been hoaxed, and made his way cautiously back towards the well.

This was exactly what Boyd wanted. He was due to leave Arlington by the 5.30, and he was confident that if he was not home by 4.30 his wife would conclude that he had met with an accident. A search-party would go first to the top of Scaurgill and then to the Shepherd's Well, and evidently Killigrew had not thought of that.

And now it was the other man's turn to bluff. He darted recklessly down a precipitous slope, stumbled at the foot, and began fumbling with his ankle as if in agony. It was not a good imitation of a bad sprain, and if it had been, Boyd would still have been sceptical.

"I'm done for now. Ankle's sprained."

Boyd sat down his usual twenty yards off and waited.

"You'll have to go for a stretcher."

"I'm not going to leave you on any account."

"But nobody might come near us for ages, and I can't lie here all night."

"Better men have lain out longer with worse things than sprained ankles."

Killigrew gave it up and tried another tack.

"A couple of thousand pounds would make all the difference to a man like you. Don't think you wouldn't see the money. I've got heaps where I'm going to, and they'll never catch me. I started making my arrangements six months ago, and I've left nothing to chance."

"I wouldn't let you go if you offered me the National Debt."

That was the last word that passed between them, and it soon appeared that Killigrew had decided to reserve his energies till nightfall. There would be no moon, and Boyd knew how difficult, not to say dangerous, it would be to dog an unscrupulous man's steps in the dark. He was quite resolved to do his utmost, but his pluck was not put to that test. There was still an hour of daylight left when a figure appeared on the summit of Scaurgill. At the first shout Killigrew was off like a hare, but Boyd kept close to him, and soon there were three men backing him up. They were a long way behind, but they were active young fellows, and were going strong when Killigrew had run himself almost to a standstill. Boyd's big brother-in-law was the first to reach him, and bowled him over like a ninepin.

"He looks a superior kind o' tramp. What's he been doin' ? Stealin' ?"

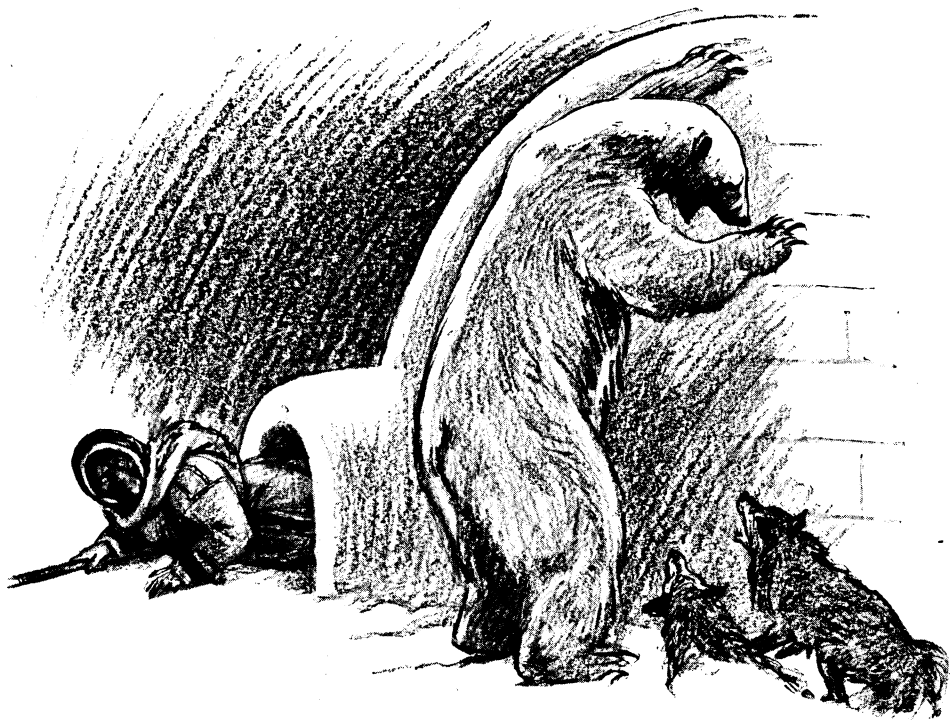
Boyd nodded, having no breath left for speech.

"What did he steal ? Half a what ? Half a pint !"

"Half a million."







"Crawling out on hands and knees, she looked up and saw a white pyramid, at the base of which snapped the surviving dogs."

# THE PASSING OF CHANTIE, THE CURLEW

By ALAN SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

**T**HIS is a tale of the year of the great sickness that came to the small brown people who live on the shores of Grant Island where it fringes the eastern borders of the Beaufort Sea. Of necessity such tales are told simply, as one speaks to a child or to those who are very old, for they deal with those who walk carefully and are slow of speech, the reason being that death is never very far away.

The North is a stern mother to the tribes that tenant her silent places. She feeds them for a time, then, perchance, starves them. She bakes them under a torrid sun,

and in a little while strikes them with killing winds. She smiles across leagues of sunny waters that soon are hidden beneath endless fields of grinding ice. She dangles her purple Aurora in the zenith that all may see and marvel, but out of her unknown regions come roaring the storms that no man may face and live. So beneath her threats and caresses the brown people are what they are—brave, simple and uncomplaining; wistful because they know not when the end may be; loving the slant-eyed children for whose safety they are ready to die; generous because hunger is brother to all;

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and, when old age comes, facing the final great adventure with unquestioning fortitude and faith.

Chantie, the Curlew, was smitten with many years. The last great event in her life had been when Oulibut, the Shining Ice, went the way of his fathers in a fine, new igloo, with a walrus tusk on top to signify that this was the place of death. She never forgot that, even though life had gone hard with her ever since. Now she was sixty-five. The way she reckoned this was by the number of times she could remember the breaking up of the ice on Beaufort Sea, added to her age when she could begin to count. And at sixty-five she lived with Metauk, her son, and his two children, Tilligoo and Nanook. Metauk had married late, and soon after the children came his wife had run a poisoned fish-hook into her palm, and gone out into the unknown, babbling strange and non-understandable things.

It was the year after that when the great sickness came to Grant Island. Elsewhere it would have been called measles, and treated accordingly, but to the small brown people it was a scourge laid on them by the Great Spirit, who had a habit of expressing himself in various recognisable ways. One could, therefore, but wait and see how heavily the punishment would fall. So the scourge spread from point to point, from bay to bay, from igloo to igloo, till morning after morning there set forth fewer and fewer hunters over the field ice, and in the scattered igloos the tribe of Metauk lay on their backs with swollen and distorted faces, staring at the curving walls that shut out Unorri, the North Wind, indifferent alike to the yelping of famished dogs and the dwindling complaint of starving children.

They died — here a hunter, there a woman and there a child, and what became of the dead it were better not to ask. Perhaps the white foxes knew, or those lean and dreadful shapes that came by night from the near-by hills. Simultaneously it seemed that the salmon deserted the shallow waters, for they swam no longer with slowly-waving fins beneath the igloo's floor, and the sinew line with its bone hook hung slack and motionless in the emerald depths.

And if within the homes of the tribe of Metauk there was disease and death, the surrounding plains held that which was equally forbidding. Day after day, night after night, droned Unorri from the speechless North, unconquerably bitter. With the wind came a fine driving snow that stung

like hot sand and made even the polar bear blink his yellow eyes. The outlines of the rocky ridges were smoothed into gentle curves; the stars, when visible, were diamond pin-points immeasurably distant; across the ice fields vast pressure ridges were thrust up, creaking and groaning; and even the ancient earth herself seemed to contract and shrink beneath her spotless blanket.

It was the finger of Fate that kept old Chantie from the curse. It may be that she was too dry and shrivelled to yield to disease. Her gums were fleshless, her skin like parchment, brown and crackling with age, and her eyes had receded till they were no more than black slits in a leathern mask. Her chief sensations were love for Nanook and Tilligoo, and a consciousness of having forgotten many things. She was famished like the rest, but her hunger soon became submerged in a vast pity for the children. At night she lay awake for hours, pinching her withered breast, and thinking of the days when Metauk's small, sleek head lay against her warm, smooth shoulder. She wondered if Oulibut, who had gone to the place where there was always good hunting and fishing, and no sickness, could see them now, and what he thought about it. Just then the children stopped babbling, and she became aware of a voice, thick and scarcely recognisable. It was the voice of Metauk. He had turned on his side so that she could just make out his distorted face.

"How long have I been thus?"

"I know not, but for many days."

"Then give me food. My belly is like a water-hole in which there is no water."

The old woman shook her tousled head. "Were there food, Tilligoo had eaten it long ago. There is none."

At that Metauk propped himself up. He was not a pretty sight, for his head seemed as large as his body.

"Then go to the igloo of Aivick and ask for seal meat. All women are fools, especially the old ones."

"There is no meat in that igloo," said Chantie patiently, "nor will Aivick bring home any more. The sickness took him, and he is dead."

Metauk made a choking little noise in his throat. "Speak, then, to Pituluk or some of the others, for the walls of my stomach are cleaving together and the strength has run out of my bones."

"Pituluk is even like yourself, calling for food when there is none to give. The salmon have gone down to the floor of the sea, and



the curse lies so heavy that there is not one hunter who can take up his spear. The white foxes are fat, but the tribe of Metauk is very lean ! ”

“ And the sickness has spared you, O worthless one ? ”

Chantie nodded. She knew that she was worthless. About all that she had been good for during past years was to chew the edges of walrus skins to make them soft for sewing into boots and kayak coverings, which meant that her teeth had dwindled to a few jagged roots. The sickness had doubtless spared her because she was not worth the taking. It was not any sign of humility to admit this. The thing was obvious.

“ What is there I can do ? ” she croaked despondently. “ The Great Spirit walks about in the storm and is angered. Who am I to reason with him ? There is no blood in my body, or I would give it to the children ; and I, too, am very weak. ”

The hunter groaned and lay back. Fire was in his veins, and strange lights danced before his eyes. There was no strength in him, either. Further than that, he was filled with a queer sense of shame at his own impotence. It cut him to the heart that his children should be famished, and he unable to feed them. Why should he be struck down, and this old crone spared ?

“ Do what no other woman has done in the tribe, ” he grunted sarcastically, feeling the fever overtake him again, “ and go out and kill something that we may eat. ”

Chantie did not answer. Presently she stooped over Nanook, and put the end of a strip of walrus hide between the boy's dry lips, at which they began to mumble vigorously. It was all there was to suck in that igloo. Her mind was working slowly, and creaked while it worked. She did not fear death for herself, but did not want to leave these small ones to die alone. Outside came a whimper from the dogs. Days ago she had tried to spear one of them, but the team had danced away out of reach, reading only too well the meaning of the weapon that quivered in her skinny hand. By now they themselves were half mad with hunger ; and, reflected Chantie, dog would soon eat dog.

She drifted off into a sort of blind wonder at what it all meant. She could not remember having deliberately offended the Great Spirit, but something must have happened. Through her pagan mind passed the simple panorama of pagan life. Killing and eating, sleep and journey, effort and rest, the igloo in the lee of the pressure ridge, the straining

sledge wriggling between a multitude of hummocks, the square flipper, warm and bloody beside his air-hole, the writhing salmon on the igloo floor, life and death and dim memories of affection in olden days, the passing of Oulibut as passes a chief—these were the pictures on the screen of her mind. She was thankful for them. They almost warmed her.

It was hours later when there came suddenly from the team a new note in which fear and excitement were sharply mingled. Metauk heard it through his stupor, and began to babble of the hunts of other days. Chantie heard it, and the blood in her ancient veins coursed the faster, for with the voice of the dogs was a deeper, hoarser sound, half cough, half grunt, that was unmistakable. The white bear walked abroad that night.

She waited, and the sound came closer. The monarch of the North was in no danger from Metauk's team, and he seemed to know it. A half-starved dog meant no more to him than a snowflake. It was plain that he, too, was hungry, for there was anger in his grunt, and his shuffling stride was carrying him nearer and nearer to the rounded dome of the house of Metauk. He could not catch a dog, but there was quarry here for the taking. Presently he upreared his gigantic height, took one vicious stroke at the nearest dog that broke its back, and laid his broad, sharp-taloned paws on the curving walls.

Chantie trembled and shook the hunter by the shoulder.

“ Awake, Metauk, and kill, ” she quavered, “ or you will die in your sleep, and all of us with you ! ”

But Metauk could not hear, having drifted off to regions where even the white bear was harmless. He only mumbled unintelligible things, pushing out his swollen lips and tossing his fevered body. Tilligoo and Nanook as well were unconscious, a shapeless tumbled mound in the half light. The terror of Chantie rose to madness, and she wrung her withered hands. The claws of the bear were cutting deep grooves in the rounded roof. Presently he would get foothold and climb up. Then the roof would collapse.

At this moment the querulous complaint of Metauk came back to her, demanding why she did not go out and kill something that he might eat. She had wondered vaguely what there was that an old woman might kill, but now, impelled by a strange

impulse, she reached convulsively for the hunter's long, stiff-bladed spear. She shivered at the touch of it, for this meant death, but there seemed nothing else to do. And the bear's paws were just two feet from her grey head, with the snow wall between. She did not look at Metauk or the small motionless figures on the sleeping ledge. It was time for an offering, and there was just one way in which to make it.

Crawling out on hands and knees, she looked up and saw a white pyramid, at the base of which snapped the surviving dogs. Never before had she beheld such a bear. There was a glimmer of moonlight in which his fur took on a sheen as of silk that rippled in quick waves with the play of his deep shoulders. He stood like a giant of a man, his lean, arrow-shaped head turned savagely at the pestering team, his long black claws distended, his massive forearms reaching nearly to the centre of the igloo dome. At his flanks danced the dogs, weak with hunger, jaws open, nostrils wrinkled, staggering as they attacked, their yellow bodies fired with an ancient enmity. It was a battle of the strong against the weak, to which there could be but one end.

As Chantie crept into view, the brute dropped on all fours, recognising a new and different opponent. The man-smell came to him, and he stood, swaying with a slow, rocking motion, while instinct moved disturbingly in the sleek skull. Then the old woman heard a roaring in her ears that came from her own pounding heart, and made one weak, uncertain thrust.

It was only a pinprick, and drew no blood, but it roused in the beast the inherent timidity of man which lurks in all animals, great and small, so instead of one swift stroke of the broad paw that would have crushed out whatever life remained in Chantie's withered body, the lord of the North lunged at the frenzied dogs and began to shuffle toward the distant hills. Simultaneously the old woman, who by this time had cast away all fear, perceived that with him would go all prospect of food. And it was for food that she had made ready to die.

It must be that in times of utter stress humanity is able to discard all human weakness and clothe itself with prodigious, if transitory, powers. In such periods the vital flame achieves an unwonted brilliance before it flickers into darkness, and mortality scales hitherto unconquered heights. So it was with Chantie, the Curlew. The knowledge that those few who were left to her,

and whom she loved with all her pagan soul, were sick and starving, and that their salvation depended on the oblation of her own worn-out body, was all-sufficient. The strength of youth flowed back in a swift, penultimate tide, bringing with it a strange fire that crept through vein and sinew, and revived wild memories of days long past. Her fingers stiffened over the spear, and she stood upright, straighter than she had stood since the day when Oulibut went into the igloo with the walrus tusk on top. She was not old any more. Her voice came back, displacing the raven-like croak of later years, and with that voice, vibrant and contemptuous, she addressed the dwindling figure of the lord of the North.

"Are you, then, a rat and the son of many rats that you run from a curlew? Do your knees knock together while you seek shelter with your wife, who hides under the snow that she may bear you a son in peace? Your hide is thick, but your blood is thin, and your heart like that of the small cross-beaked birds that come when the sun is warm. Stop, therefore, that I may pull your heart forth and give it to the dogs."

Now, whether it was the dogs that snapped at his heels or the effect of this stream of derision poured out by the ancient crone as she stumbled gasping through the drifts, no man can say, but something penetrated the great carcase so that the bear halted and, turning, upreared himself, as though to put an end to so outrageous a situation. Chantie, seeing this, realised that her race was nearly run, and what there was left for her to do must be done very quickly. Therefore she crept up as close as she dared, and, dropping on one knee, wedged the butt of Metauk's spear into a cranny of projecting ice, sloping the weapon forward so that it pointed directly at the great white chest.

"Come, O coward with the spirit of a fish," she quavered shrilly, "and I will throw your entrails to the dogs!"

The white pyramid swayed forward to bring this pigmy assailant within reach of his thick forearms. Chantie involuntarily shut her eyes, for the lean head was now directly above her own. Then amid the furious barking of the team she heard a choking grunt. The spear shaft quivered and bent. She could see nothing, the world being blotted out by the huge, overhanging body, but her stiffened arm grew suddenly wet. For an instant thus, while the vast weight seemed to poise above her, till, with a crack,

the shaft splintered in her grip, she felt something stinging and searing into her side, and then the heavens fell and crushed her into the snow. The last thing she heard was a muffled barking that sounded as though it came from a long way off.

She struggled back to consciousness a little later, feeling that her side was burning and her face buried in fur, close and choking, making it hard to breathe. Then her eyes cleared. She was partly under the bear, which was lying still, with the dogs guzzling at his rent flanks, while the double-edged spear projected stiffly from the prone carcass. Chantie had no feeling of triumph, but only of extreme weakness. The fire and the frenzy had passed, leaving her an old, old woman, wounded to the death, and with her final offering yet unmade. There was little time now in which to make it.

She managed to twist herself free, and with ultimate effort dislodged the spear. The dogs took no notice of her, being too busy stuffing their empty bellies with hot

Then the snow fell again like a ghostly blanket, in which she pitted her dwindling vitality against the onslaught of storm and bitter cold. She did not think at all, but only laboured, her lips set tight, a strange flicker in her glassy eyes. And with every movement it was as though the spear were penetrating her own tortured side. The final oblation was nearly made now.

Ten minutes later Metauk, who was lying motionless in his skin sleeping-bag, felt something familiar touch his dry mouth. He could not open his lips, because they were too swollen, but every fibre in his famished body thrilled to the taste of fresh meat. There was no asking whence it came, nor could Tilligoo or Nanook put the question, but all three lay and sucked in strength from the wild body that so late had roamed the frigid spaces of the North. The life of the white bear was now theirs, and flowed mysteriously through every vein. Their faltering heart-beats steadied, their chilled limbs grew warmer, till pre-



"She crept up as close as she dared, and, dropping on one knee, wedged the butt of Metauk's spear into a cranny of projecting ice."

meat. The spear she found was but a poor cutting instrument, and it took precious moments to hack off a lump of dripping flesh. Even as she toiled at this, the strength ran out of her like water, and her fingers became caked with a grisly glaze.

sently sleep crept in through the igloo door and spread its beneficent cloak over the home of Metauk, the hunter.

But there was one whom sleep did not reach. Chantie sat silent in the gloom, waiting for the sands of life to run out. She

managed to light the stone lamp by using a little of the bear's fat, and laid the rest of the meat close by the faces of the sick ones, so that by no chance could they miss it. She pulled in the sinew fishing-line and rebaited the bone hook. If a salmon came now, he would not pass that. She arranged the broken spear with its stained blade by Metauk's side, that her son might not accuse her of carelessness, for good spears were scarce

stars came out, and with them a quivering Aurora that shook its gleaming banners in the zenith and shed a soft radiance over the home of Metauk, the hunter. The satiated dogs curled up and slept, while four gaunt forms stole down from the hills toward the stiffened body of the white bear. All else was motionless.

It was nearly morning before Metauk moved. He felt better, and not nearly so hungry. His lids opened more freely. Turning, his mouth touched meat. It was frozen solid, but he began to tear at it, driving in his strong teeth with ever-



on Beaufort Sea. Then because her breast was burning so that it hurt horribly even to breathe, she pulled the hood of her walrus skin tunic over her head, and laid down on the floor with her face against the igloo wall. There was nothing more she could remember to do.

Hours passed. Unorri, the North Wind, ceased to moan, and over the whole stark wilderness spread a strange calm. The

increasing energy. Presently he stopped eating and puckered his brows.

"Is it, then, Pituluk who has killed the bear that I dreamed was climbing on the roof of the igloo, or?"—and here the hunter chuckled derisively—"is it, perhaps, that an aged curlew with no feathers in her tail has gone out and brought me the heart of the lord of the North?"

But Chantie, the Curlew, did not answer.

# THE MAN WHO KEPT A DIARY

By J. C. SQUIRE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

MR. WILLIAM WIGGLESWORTH was a bachelor. He had greying hair, a bald spot, a small moustache, chambers in Gray's Inn, and a respectable, but not a bloated, income. His only near relative was his niece Mary, who was engaged in social work. Now it was nursing, now it was education, now it was the promotion of international harmony. She had poorly paid jobs in connection with all these successively, and she more than earned her pay, for her ability was considerable and her disinterested idealism even more notable still. They often talked of Society and the duties of its members. "Well, uncle," Mary would say, "no doubt you are very kind in your own circle. You helped your charwoman's family, you have helped me, I have sometimes persuaded you to subscribe, and you give handsome Christmas boxes to the porter at the gate. But you really do not justify your existence."

"My existence," Mr. Wigglesworth would murmur in reply. "Can I really be of importance to anyone? I am a very humble person, really. I merely want to go on my quiet way. I am unfitted at this stage to earn my living. I know nothing whatever about politics; besides which, nobody in politics would ever take me seriously. I make what you would consider a good use of the margin of my small income; my pleasures, which consist of reading a little and observing the world a little, are surely harmless. I beg you do not attempt to convert me into something other than I am."

"Oh, uncle, you are hopeless," Mary would reply; and, with a sigh, she would resign herself to enjoying the admirable luncheon that he had provided for her.

The sherry and the claret she often forgot

to commend; but, idealist though she was, she never attempted to conceal her liking for the lobster, of which she always secured the major share. After luncheon, with her coffee-cup in her hand, she would walk round the room, looking a little enviously at his books, which were numerous and well-bound. She knew so little about them, and she wished she had time to know more. Yet at the end, in spite of all their mutual affection, she always went away wondering whether this selfish bachelor existence ought to be tolerated. Was not such epicureanism the canker which destroyed empires? Was not Mr. Wigglesworth, however modest and conventionally virtuous, one of those drones in the hive whose parasitical presence makes the workers so justly angry? She would sometimes discuss him with her more intimate friends.

"I know," she would say, "that it's hopeless to expect him to go into the House. But if only he would serve on Committees, or become honorary secretary of the Lifeboats or the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families, it would be better than nothing."

"But how on earth, my dear," the friend would reply, "does he spend his time?"

"Oh," she would reply, "fritters it away somehow. He goes to his club, and he goes to private views, and he sometimes goes out to tea, and he sometimes gets asked to a City dinner. I believe he knows all the booksellers and picture dealers, and old friends ask him away for week-ends. And sometimes he gives men's dinners in his chambers. Most of the men he asks are lawyers. In the morning he reads *The Times*, and sticks in bookplates and throws out crumbs for the pigeons."

"What a life!"

"Yes, what a life!"

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## II.

For the ninety-ninth time Mary had been tackling her uncle about his lack of occupation. He had, she thought, been more than usually annoying about it to-day. On previous occasions he had at least had the grace to be embarrassed by her reproaches, and to try perpetually to change the subject. How well she knew those artless stratagems, the questions about her work, the comments on the morning's news, the solicitudes about her health, the remarks about letters which he had received from distant cousins in Australia, the sudden suspicions, even, that there was something wrong with the wine and that a fresh bottle must be obtained.

"No, my dear Mary, let me get you another glass; I simply cannot allow you to drink that."

To-day there had been an odd difference in the atmosphere—no evasions, no shame-faced excuses. Almost always in the past, though his appalling inner stubbornness and inertia had beaten her on the major issue, she had at least reduced his arguments to pulp. He had hardly even attempted to argue, only to beg immunity from too severe a condemnation. To-day he had assumed another and a very exasperating attitude; it was for all the world as though he had just parted from some bold, conscienceless, even misogynist ally in the background, who had braced him to fight for his evil cause. To-day there had been none of those rather pathetic silences under rebuke, when care settled on Mr. Wigglesworth's forehead, and his heavily-lidded eyes looked sadly out of the window in search of the relief which he knew would not be forthcoming. There was a new confidence in his bearing, something almost of boisterousness. Her most direct assaults were met, not merely with equanimity, but with jocularity. His eyes looked straight at her, and they positively glittered with amusement. When she attacked, he almost seemed inclined to counter-attack; he even chaffed her. No captain of industry or attorney could have worn a more, assured air, no successful sailor could have been more buoyant.

"Was he drunk?" she asked herself for one awkward moment. But no, he was not drunk. Yet he could not have been more unlike himself had he been at the crisis of a desperate bout.

"Occupation?" he said. "There are all sorts of occupations. I don't wish to criticise your mode of life, but I must ask you to suspend judgment about mine. I

fully agree that my pursuits are not obviously utilitarian, but you really must take it from me that there may be more in them than meets the eye."

"It's all very well, Uncle William," she replied, "but I'm not going on my own opinion, though I should have thought that the way in which you waste your time was perfectly obvious, and I confess that until now I always thought you admitted it yourself. It isn't only me; everybody I know, who knows you, thinks it too dreadful that you haven't got any aim in life except just amusing yourself. I know you're not selfish at the bottom, but it does look like it, doesn't it?"

Mr. Wigglesworth bit his lip and hesitated a little, while Mary recollected, in a flash, all the occasions on which she had tried to whitewash her uncle. "I know he's rather weak, but he's most awfully kind really. He's too modest; he doesn't think himself capable of really useful work. And it's so difficult to change old habits, isn't it, especially for a bachelor living by himself?" Had she been mistaken? Had the mask of diffidence and frailty at last fallen from a nature which, in truth, had always been hard and wilful?

She rose unhappily as soon as the meal was over. "I'm very sorry, Uncle William," she said in a slightly strained voice, with her gaze averted. "I've got an appointment, and I shan't be able to wait for coffee."

"Look here, Mary," he said, with sudden decision, taking the door-handle from her and waving her to the comfortable window-seat. "You simply must stay for a few minutes."

Still a shade sulky, she half attempted to renew her protestations, but he would have none of them, and her chagrin was displaced by curiosity when he added, with a very earnest air: "I've found it very difficult to tell you, but I can't bear that you should misunderstand any longer. I am not so idle as you think." She was baffled and bewildered: images crowded on her confusedly—secret service, a midnight concentration on the ologies. He was smiling blandly at her. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I am keeping a diary."

"What?" she exclaimed, as though he had said he was keeping a spaniel. "I can't see that there's anything remarkable about that. I keep one myself."

"Yes, Mary," he went on, "but mine may be a little different." Mr. Wigglesworth

was always an exact man, with a dislike for overstatement, so he left it at that.

"Oh!" said Mary, rather mystified.

"Yes," added her uncle, with a slightly conspiratorial air; "but I'd rather, if you don't mind, that you kept it a secret."

When she reached the Bureau of Psycho-Technical Research, she at once went to the room of her friend Agatha Bonner and told her all about it. A passion for social reconstruction does not always imply a general education, but Agatha Bonner was unusually well-read. She took in the situation at once.

"I don't know your uncle, Mary," she observed, "but I take it he is hardly likely to be a Marie Bashkirtseff. You are probably the niece of a modern classic. It's rather thrilling, Mary; it may be a great historical document."

"Well, I never!" said Mary. "The old fox!" But the cordiality of their relations was subsequently uninterrupted.

### III.

It is one thing to talk about a man behind his back and another to talk to him to his face. Many months elapsed before anybody directly mentioned his clandestine activities to Mr. Wigglesworth, and then it was a total stranger, a large lady with a treble chin whom he had taken down to dinner in a young Jewish politician's house in Bayswater. During the soup she looked at him coyly, and in a winning whisper said to him: "Oh, dear Mr. Wigglesworth, I would give anything for a glance at your famous diary."

Our friend smiled, urbanely yet modestly, and observed, "Honestly, I don't think you'd find it very interesting. People exaggerate so absurdly," and then hastened to turn the conversation to Mr. Epstein's latest exhibition.

The lady was pertinacious, and several times during the meal showed an inclination to return to the theme; but Mr. Wigglesworth successfully fenced her off without direct rudeness, and even managed to avoid conceding her an invitation to see his charming collection of pictures in his delightful chambers, about which she had heard so much. This encounter, had it been reached without preliminary warnings, might have startled Mr. Wigglesworth. In the old days, indeed, it would have been a matter of great surprise to him had any stranger at all disclosed, not merely interest in, but bare knowledge of his previous existence. He had walked quietly on the outskirts of the

pulsing world, and had grown accustomed to pass unnoticed. But during these last months the community had shown increasing symptoms of a new attitude towards him. Several college friends, who for years had forgotten him in the pursuit of their promising careers, had sent him invitations to stay in the country. He had gone; he had found himself included in carefully chosen and entirely enjoyable parties. More than this, diffident though he was, he had been unable to avoid feeling that he had held his own with the wittiest and the most important. The days had apparently passed when, except his few intimates, nobody asked him anywhere except to fill an odd chair, and when, in a crowd, he had been accustomed to find his partner, after a few perfunctory words to him, addressing herself to her other neighbour. And he confessed feeling to himself that he liked the change; it was agreeable to find people laughing in chorus at his little jokes, to be engaged, as equal with equal, in earnest discussions by persons at the centre of affairs, to be consulted as to his wishes, and to be persuaded into joining all the most pleasant excursions.

His town life, meanwhile, had suffered a similar gradual transformation. Cards had begun to pour in on him from everybody he had ever met, and from some enterprising hostesses whom he had never met at all. Wherever he was asked, there he went; it was a congenial change to have a status in the world. He was beginning to talk very well, and he was always the cause of good talk in others. It was especially stimulating to find so many people anxious to discover what his opinions were concerning art, letters and politics. They seemed so often to wish to agree with him.

Materially he was also prospering. At the second large political reception to which he had gone, a Cabinet Minister edged him aside into a corner and, after putting very strongly his own side in a very complicated dispute then raging behind the scenes, gave him a financial tip on which he told him he could safely put his shirt. This Mr. Wigglesworth did, with the result that he found no difficulty at all in producing the large entrance fees and annual subscriptions of the three excellent clubs which he had recently been persuaded to join. In a thousand and one ways Mr. Wigglesworth had perceived the indications of a growing interest and prestige. As we have seen, therefore, it was no shock to him when point-

blank he was informed that his carefully-guarded secret was out. He did not even seem to mind.

#### IV.

BARELY two seasons had passed since all London that counts had grown familiar with the notion of Mr. Wigglesworth as chronicler-in-chief to his time before an ever-vigilant Press became aware of him. The first paragraph which came to Mr. Wigglesworth's eyes was a scanty one, but significant in that nobody else under the rank of a countess was mentioned in it. It appeared in a column signed "Yvonne," and ran :

"Yesterday at an exclusive club I listened to a fascinating conversation in which two statesmen of European reputation and a famous admiral took part. The subject was diaries, and the possibility of our own eventful time providing posterity with a diarist of the standing and value of Pepys or Greville. The opinion was unanimous that a record of the kind was likeliest to come from the pen of Mr. Augustus Wigglesworth. Mr. Wigglesworth, who is one of the best-known and busiest of men about Town, goes everywhere and sees everybody. For years he has kept a full



"'I won't have it! You've got to tear it out. . . . I'll take proceedings!'"

"Amongst the well-known people seen at the Canine Waifs and Strays Thé-Dansant yesterday were Prince Hippos of Greece, the Grand Duke Justinian, Lord Ramsgate, Lady Clackmannan and her two charming children Bertie and Gertie, and Mr. Herbert Wigglesworth, who watched with interest, but did not dance. *On dit*, by the way, that when Mr. Wigglesworth's diary appears, the dovescotes are likely to be fluttered."

Only a few days elapsed, however, before a further and more elaborate reference was made, this time by a male *causeur*.

day-to-day record, and a duchess told me the other day that Mr. Wigglesworth had been the repository of more secrets than even the late Sir George Lewis."

This became the stock form of all subsequent allusions, and they need not detain us further. It was natural that after the matter had been openly referred to in print, Mr. Wigglesworth should on occasion find people bold enough to refer to it in his presence. Yet these were comparatively few. Now and then a brazen lady would beg for a glimpse of the diary.



Once, on a wet Sunday morning in the country, his hostess blandly suggested that the company should come upstairs to her room and Mr. Wigglesworth should read them a few innocuous extracts. "Do! Only quite old ones about people who are all dead." Our hero evaded the request easily—he carried no diary about with him.

"What about the entries you made last night?" cried one of the sprightlier of the younger ladies; whilst the Solicitor-General, who had that evening engaged Mr. Wigglesworth in an earnest conversation, gave an involuntary stare of consternation.

"There were none," said Mr. Wigglesworth, and, as a concession, gave them a number of reminiscences which were very dull, although entirely truthful.

The one place where frequent reference to his habits was made was the smoking-room of the liveliest and latest of his clubs. There he lived on terms of affectionate esteem with a number of subalterns whose sense of humour was crude. They would banter each other at tea-time, and when one of them had made a remark of more than ordinary obscenity, another would say: "Mind you put that in your diary, Wigglesworth." At which the whole assembly would burst into a loud guffaw.

"A busy man," they said in the paragraphs. To Mr. Wigglesworth's shame it must be confessed that he was just as idle as he had been in the days of his retirement. He still lived in Gray's Inn; he still rose late; he merely went about more and talked more; nobody ever saw him working. But the world knew his *raison d'être*, and, besides that, it was impossible that a man who was seen so much could be conceived as anything but an active man. In truth, he had never even joined a committee. In the old days, except for the sporadic and unsupported solicitations of Mary, he never received a request from anybody to do anything; he was too obscure. Nowadays nobody asked him—though he occasionally accepted the office of patron or vice-president—because he was too celebrated.

"Who else can we put on?" the conversation would run.

"What about Wigglesworth? He's very sensible, and everybody knows him."

"Oh, you can't ask him; he's sure to have much too much on his hands to settle down to a routine job." A Trusteeship of the National Portrait Gallery was another

matter; that he was pleased to take, especially when he remembered how little notice anybody took of his opinions on art in the old days. This was his one real office.

He kept the diary. It was all he did. During those first few years he learnt a good deal about human nature. In a few instances men with whom he had been intimate in the past seemed to avoid him; they grew constrained in his presence and looked askance. Once one of them broke silence and revealed to Mr. Wigglesworth the disadvantages of his new rôle. He was sitting in his library late at night, drinking a last whisky and reading Saint Simon, when there came a sharp knock at the door.

"Come in!" he called, laying down his book, covers upwards; and there appeared, red and embarrassed, yet oddly resolute, the face of Sir Herbert Pantile, the K.C.

"Excellent, Pantile!" exclaimed Wigglesworth. "It's splendid to see you. I thought you were never going to come near me again. Have a drink?"

"No, thank you," said the lawyer shortly, sitting upright on the edge of a hard chair. "Look here, Wigglesworth, there's something I want to speak to you about."

"Why not?" said Mr. Wigglesworth. "Though I don't suppose I shall be able to be of any use."

"Don't you, though? Well, I'd better come to the point at once. Do you remember that time in these rooms when I told you about that affair with Sylvia?"

"Why, of course," said Mr. Wigglesworth sympathetically, "and I can't say how sorry I was."

Pantile glared at him. Then he suddenly burst forth. "Look here, to put it bluntly, I know very well you've got every word of it down in your infernal diary!" His eye caught a large black enamelled deed-box in the corner; he flushed again and almost shouted: "I won't have it! You've got to tear it out. It's monstrous. It's blackguardly! I'll—I'll—I'll take proceedings!"

"Listen to me," said Mr. Wigglesworth, really perturbed and distressed. "I swear solemnly that not a word of that has ever passed my lips, nor is there a syllable about it in any diary I may have kept."

"What proof have I got?" asked Pantile, a little mollified, but still suspicious. "Everybody knows that a diarist would defeat his own objects if he told

everybody what he was putting down. I'd like to see that day's entry."

"I can't show you that," said Mr. Wigglesworth. "I don't suppose you were the only person I saw that day, and the confidences of others must be respected as well as yours. On my word of honour as an old friend, your name is not so much as mentioned either on that page of my diary or any other. That's the absolute truth."

The assurance was at last believed, yet something about the mode in which it was conveyed seemed to leave Sir Herbert even more angry than he was before. Before he was red, and now he went white. "Good night," he said brusquely, and walked out without shaking hands.

Mr. Wigglesworth sighed and realised that, however silver the lining, there must always be a cloud. Yet how small his clouds usually were in these days! Those who avoided him were as nothing in number compared with those who sought him out. Men saved up their jokes for him, and rattled them out breathlessly. Women dressed for him, strikingly and in a describable fashion, as though they wished to be raw material for epigrams; he was, in a manner, an elevator of social standards; at his approach the sober vegetable garden became the gay parterre; like the sun, he illuminated everything upon which his radiance fell. Great men, whose eyes would have absently glazed if left with him in the days of his obscurity, now sparkled and shone to meet him. Many and various were the confidences he received. He knew, and was one of the very few who knew, why Crete had not made war on Corea, and for the sake of posterity three several persons had given him a full account of the negotiations which led to the passage of the Imperial Federation Act.

Private scandals rained upon him. Even when, as occasionally happened, a hubbub ceased awkwardly as he entered a room, and he felt all too sure that something was being concealed from him, it always reached him in the end. "You remember, Mr. Wigglesworth, that day when you found us all in the drawing-room together. Well, I wonder if you guessed what it was we were talking about. I'm sure I oughtn't to tell you, but I simply must. You'll hardly believe it—it's almost too disgraceful—but Billy says that Betty——"

Yes, the diary was seldom mentioned, but it had a thousand contributors and a thousand candidates. Several times a lady

told him that she had been the One Real Love of some illustrious dead man. Painters, novelists, even sometimes a preternaturally intelligent commercial magnate, sought the diarist's private and particular attention. Two or three people even bequeathed flattering miniatures of themselves to him when they died. Truly the faces that were presented to Mr. Wigglesworth were not always characteristic faces, and he was assured that, screened from the world, there was a better side to many natures deemed hard, ambitious, and grasping. He was astonished at the industry with which people endeavoured to reinforce the impressions they had first made upon him. With him the wit was always preternaturally witty, the dreamer abnormally dreamy, the sagacious man sagacious indeed. He often marvelled at the aspirations thus innocently revealed to him, and wondered now and then, after a long encounter, whether or not he had imposed too great a histrionic stress upon some strenuous aspirant after a reputable immortality; whether or not, sometimes, his departure might be the signal for a reaction, a collapse, a call for restoratives, a swoon even.

#### V.

NOBODY was surprised when Mr. William Wigglesworth became a K.B.E. The marvel was rather that so generally respected and trusted a figure should not have been honoured before. "For public services," the description in the list briefly ran. After all, he was patron and vice-president of a great many indispensable organisations, and he had contributed substantially to the National Art Collection Fund. The Prime Minister had insisted: otherwise Mr. Wigglesworth might have declined.

He took a childish pleasure, when attending vast parties at which orders and decorations were worn by all save him, in being the only man in the room with a plain black coat. At such parties the diarist was, in his later years, an invariable feature, much balder now, a little rounder, his moustache gone completely white. He would stand, the complacent but charming centre of an admiring circle, or wander through the rooms, exchanging cheery words with dowagers and diplomatists, artists, men of letters and, with a due admixture of deference, Princes of the Blood. Sometimes Mary, now Mrs. Wilkins, would be there. "Yes," she would whisper proudly to her companion, "of course he's my uncle."

And what, in such brilliant scenes, were

the thoughts of Mr. Wigglesworth—or as we must now call him, Sir William—as he moved so successfully through this world where events were being moulded and history, of which he was to be recorder, made? He kept them to himself, as had always been his way; but they ran like this: “There is Barnby beckoning to me. He is shaping for an entry in the diary. He conceives it like this:

“‘At the Queensferrys’ crush I saw — and Barnby. Poor fellow, he has taken on

too much, and they overwork the willing horse. The Polish business is obviously weighing on his mind, but it is simply his duty to spare himself. We cannot afford to let him have a breakdown. He looked anxious, worried, but the lines he has contracted only make his thoughtful face more handsome.’

“Little does he realise that I should be much likelier to put it down like this:

“‘Saw that pompous ass Barnby at the Queensferrys’. His stupidity and smugness



“At such parties the diarist was, in his later years, an invariable feature.”

are bad enough, but that look of spurious concentration is more than I can bear. It was like his infernal cheek to pester me with his veiled abuse of all his colleagues.'

"And there, again, on the balcony is Palmer, the poetaster. He has seen me, but, of course, he pretends not to have.

I know what he wants. 'His pale profile against the soft midnight sky, a strange alien in that worldly scene.' Yes, I know all about that. The most disgusting *poseur*



"He would stand, the complacent but charming centre of an admiring circle."

in London, and about the worst poet who ever deluded the world into taking him seriously. Poor little Jones over there in the corner is ten thousand times better. I'll go up and speak to him, though I shall probably frighten him out of his life." Then he would go down the staircase, chatting and nodding to the orders and decorations, get his hat and coat, and depart alone in a taxi for Gray's Inn. The porter would unbolt to him and, under the dark sky, he would walk through the quiet old squares and up the rustling avenue of trees to his rooms and his secret—a mystery, an enigma, a sphinx, the repository of a myriad confessions and the divulger of none.

## VI.

DIARISTS and non-diarists, we all travel the same road. The last entry must be made. There is a page filled, and the next page must remain empty for ever. One night Sir William left a jolly men's party at Panton's studio, looking as well as ever; next evening the papers recorded that he had been found dead in his chair. *The Times*, on the following day, had a long and respectful obituary notice. "Sir William," it said, "was a man of great energy and multifarious interests. His services to . . . will long be remembered. He had a host of friends, and was on terms of close intimacy with half the most eminent men of his day. But it is quite possible—nay, likely—that to our remote descendants he may be far better known than to his contemporaries. It has long been matter of common report that throughout his life he was an indefatigable diarist. Few, if any, have been privileged to see his records, but his opportunities for observation were unique. Wigglesworth's diary may well take its place besides Pepys' and Greville's. The comparison is not too extravagant. Sir William's industry and opportunities were fully equal to those of his predecessors, and in point of wit and breadth of culture he surpassed both of them. We understand that the executors

under Sir William's will are the Rt. Hon. Lord Barnby and Mr. Godfrey Palmer, the poet, both friends of long standing."

## VII.

So it was, and in a codicil of the will Sir William not only gave his executors full discretion as to the publication and expurgation of his diary, and the ultimate disposal of the manuscript, but provided that any profits arising therefrom should be divided between the executors named, assuming them to consent to act. The residue of the estate he left to his niece Mary, now the wife of John Wilkins, Esq., of Somerset House. The executors undertook the burden of the trust.

One spring morning, when the sun shone brightly and the rooks cawed cheerfully over the tree-tops in Bacon's Walk, a little company assembled in the old chambers, still tidy and comfortable as their late tenant had left them. Lord Barnby had brought his secretary, Mr. Palmer had come alone; the fourth of the party was the deceased's solicitor, who had brought a bunch of keys. There was an air of expectation, even of excitement, about the party. Mr. Palmer fingered books on the shelves almost feverishly, while the solicitor cryptically fumbled with papers in his attaché case. At last he was ready. "Well, gentlemen," he said heartily, rubbing his hands, "we may now gaze upon the buried treasure." The key went into the lock and was turned.

They pulled them out. There were four enormous volumes, as large as ledgers. All except one were completely virgin of any writing. On the first page of that one there was a date carefully written and a note of the phase of the moon, underneath, in large block capitals, this sole and simple entry:

THIS IS THE DIARY I HAVE KEPT. I HAVE KEPT IT FOR YEARS. I THINK, IF PUBLISHED, IT SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AS IT STANDS. SHOULD MY EXECUTORS IN THEIR WISDOM THINK OTHERWISE, THE RESPONSIBILITY IS THEIRS.

W. W.





OUTLOOK OVER NAPLES AND ITS BAY TO THE SMOKING CONE OF VESUVIUS, TEN MILES AWAY.

# INTO THE FIERY CRATER OF VESUVIUS

By H. D. GIRDWOOD, O.B.E., LL.D., F.R.G.S.

*Photographs by Realistic Travels, copyrighted in the United States of America.*

VOLCANOES from time immemorial have appealed to the imagination and credulity of the human race. Through-out widely separated lands they have struck terror into men's hearts. It was this fascination, impelling study of volcanic activity, that found me recently at the head of an expedition whose mission was to explore and photograph the explosive volcanoes of the Mediterranean group—Etna, Stromboli, and Vesuvius.

Several times during the past twenty years have I seen these volcanoes and, tourist-like, watched them in their capricious moods. I landed at Messina shortly after

Etna shrugged its mighty shoulders and threw down that noble city in the third greatest earthquake disaster of all time, when 96,000 persons perished. I have passed Stromboli by day and seen the barren, bleak slopes smoking with lava-streams down to the water's edge, and I have sailed past at night when this same stream was turned into a fiery streak of glowing lava.

Several times have I stood on the outer crater wall of Vesuvius and peered into the smoking vortex, or turned away choking as fumes and gas caught me. These hasty visits never took me to the heart of things.

Therefore our expedition determined to spend many days and nights around and on Vesuvius.

You must sleep on its barren slopes. You must descend into the awful fiery crater itself and walk over the floor of molten lava, where a false step would mean the most terrifying end. You must take your

fresh eruption, you then commence to get a glimpse of the volcano in its appalling majesty. Before attacking this formidable monster, our party journeyed to Puzzuoli, where members with torches in hand set fire to the subterranean gases which are continually being ejected from "Little Vesuvius." In a moment the almost in-



EDGE OF A DEVOURING LAVA-FLOW THAT SUBMERGED THIS VALLEY UNDER ROCK AND ASHES TO A DEPTH OF THIRTY FEET.

life in your hands and climb up the inner cone until you come within five yards of the belching, bellowing vent, while, with a sound of heavy artillery, viscid molten lavas, in clots as large as your head, fall all around and even behind you, any one of which might strike you down in agonising death.

When you have thus stood face to face with death, and have seen the terror of a

visible gas bursts into flame from every crater and fissure. Here new craters appear every month or so, and others die away. A puddle of brackish hot water remains, which gradually silts up with sand, leaving only a mass of salt and sulphur to mark the former crater site.

These gases are strongly impregnated with sulphuretted hydrogen, and the bubbling sand will cook an egg in the



orthodox three minutes. I myself may be seen in one of the photographs here reproduced, enveloped in sulphur gases, eating eggs thus cooked. I do not recommend this hot luncheon to anyone else, as the fumes blackened the spoon and even the silver coins in my pocket, and in ten minutes I ate and imbibed more sulphur than I did in a full month's treatment at the sulphur springs at Harrogate.

In this article I will confine myself to the personal experiences incidental to leading an expedition in the nearest approach made by man to the actual inner crater of the world's most tragic volcano, Vesuvius.

There are days when Vesuvius is angry, when the sulphuric and hydrochloric acid gases are swept down and around by the wind, and completely fill the outer crater, so that no one, even in a gas mask, could move over the crevassed lava floor or climb the precipitous heights. In fact, no guides could be induced by any money to lead an expedition under such conditions of wind and gas. It would be foredoomed to disaster.

By sleeping on the slopes of Vesuvius, we were able to study the wind and gases from hour to hour, and were ready to seize the first favourable opportunity of making the descent into the crater. Nor was the time wasted while we were thus waiting. We explored the fertile lower slopes of the volcano, where the peasants can raise in the rich soil four crops a year—tomatoes in October, salad and onions in January, beans in March, potatoes and tomatoes in June, often grown simultaneously with

the choicest grapes, figs, olives and pomegranates.

Farther down we saw workmen with carts quarrying and carting away blocks of lava, from the stream of 1906, to pave the streets of new villages being built on the roof-tops of houses overwhelmed in former eruptions.



EATING EGGS COOKED IN THREE MINUTES IN THE HOT, BUBBLING SANDS OF THE CRATER AT PUZZUOLI.

Pompeii and Herculaneum lay basking in the sun, as they did nearly two thousand years ago, when the greatest volcanic blast ever known in the world's history blew away the whole southern half of the mighty crater—three miles in diameter—of Mount Somma and destroyed those beautiful cities at its base. At Torre Annunziata children



were playing hide-and-seek in the upper story of houses engulfed by the twenty-five-feet deep lava stream.

We had our food at Casa Bianca, where

wine, made from grapes grown in the richest sector of this exceedingly fertile soil.

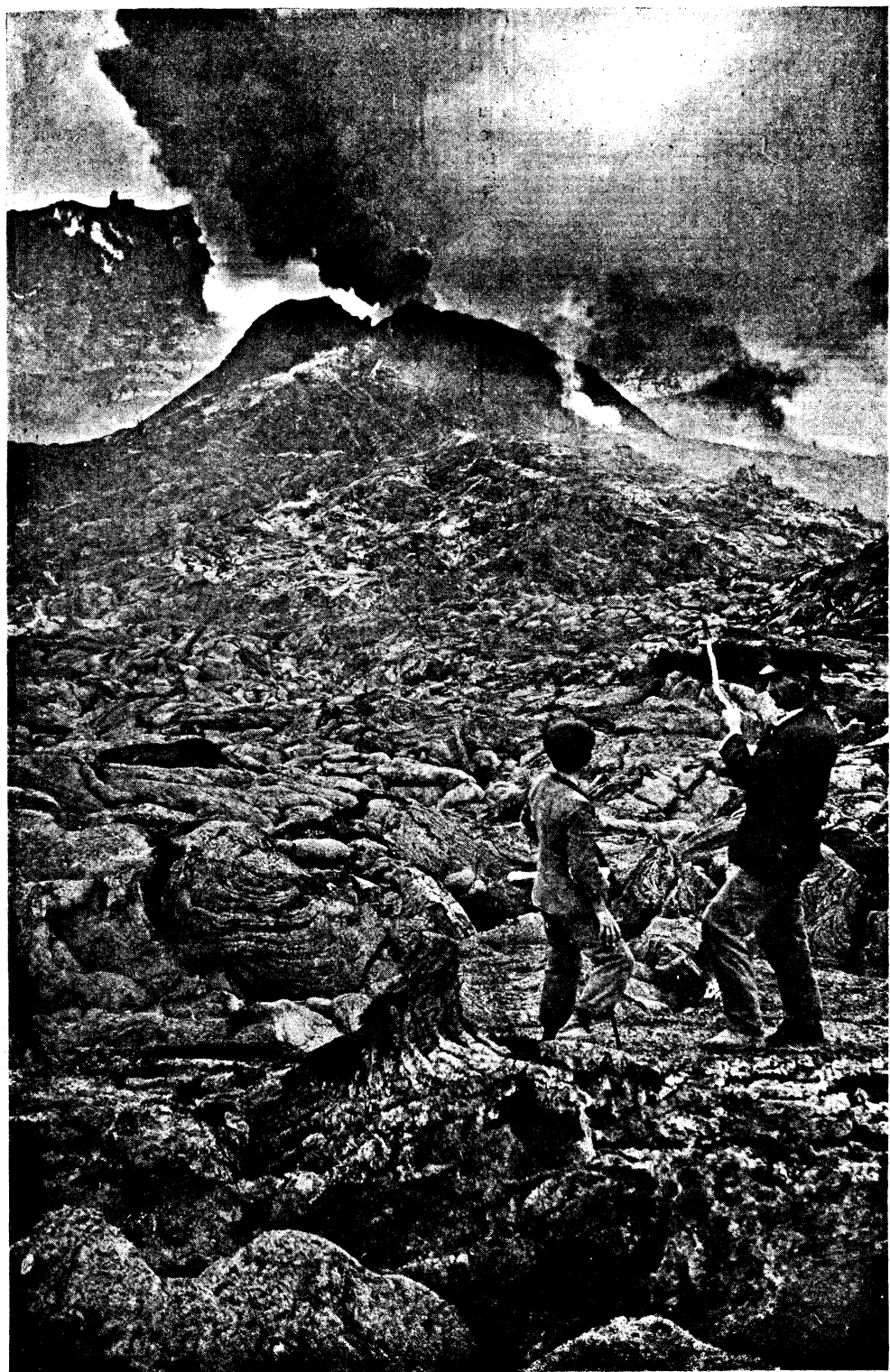
Ordinarily, tourists are conducted to the



LOOKING INTO THE MOUTH OF THE YAWNING CRATER OF VESUVIUS, EIGHT HUNDRED FEET DOWN TO THE SEETHING INNER CONE.

our host showed us his ingenious wine cellar, excavated out of the former hostelry, which was completely buried by lava. The upper bedrooms of yesterday become the deep wine cellars of to-day. We sampled the famous sickly-sweet *Lachryma Christi*

top of Vesuvius by one of two ways—either by the orthodox funicular, or on horses or mules from Bascotrecase. Often parties go up at night to see the fiery, glowing mass of lava within the crater, and one evening, as we looked down, it seemed impossible that



INSIDE THE CRATER OF VESUVIUS: THE TWISTED, FURROWED FLOOR OF LAVA  
AROUND THE INNER CONE.

we could walk on this fiery mass and yet come out alive.

While sleeping on the slopes of Vesuvius, waiting for our dash, we were often awakened by the angry voices of guides and porters quarrelling with and demanding

tourists, but workers like themselves. We did not belong to the "tourist" class, who "are there to be fleeced." Over a few bottles of their favourite vintage we were able to arrange one "grand charge" for our five guides and for carting all our cameras, plates, and paraphernalia during the entire trip. All arrangements being thus completed, we awaited the hour.

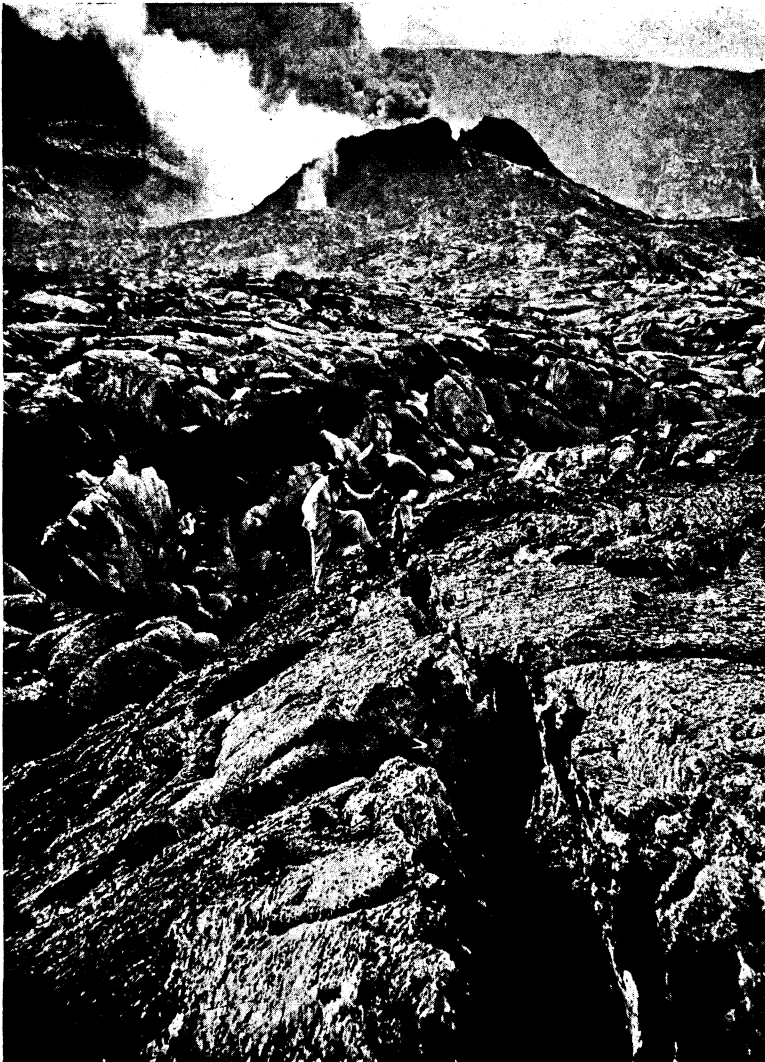
While we were sleeping beneath the stars, the wind gradually died down, the glowing fiery mass of incandescent gases and smoke seemingly contracted and, instead of being spread all around the crater-sides and slopes of the demon, shot by degrees more and more upwards, and mushroomed at a considerable height directly above the cone of angry Vesuvius.

Gradually the stars faded out, and the first beams of early day kissed the motionless clouds as rosy a hue as the waning shafts from earth's unquenched fires had crimsoned the rising vapours. Not a breath of air was stirring.

The omens were

favourable, as the monster still continued to breathe his poisonous fumes upwards without a twist or turning until they spread fanshape in thinner air.

Our whole party was soon astir. The muleteers were shouting at the kicking mules as the heavy apparatus was loaded up. Our dragoman was gesticulating with



EXPLORING THE LAVA-FIELD IN THE CRATER: THE GUIDE ASSISTING TOURISTS OVER A HUGE FISSURE.

more money from tourists whom they were conducting on horseback. Scarcely a party came down without being made to pay exorbitant charges for "extra services," either unwittingly or after tremendous altercations. Profiting by these constant brawls, we saw the chief guide, and explained in best Italian that we were not

the guides. Coffee and rolls were hastily devoured. Our expert camera-man was disturbed from his dreamy slumber, and with shouting and yelling, slashing of whips

and olives, by vineyards and fertile gardens, then over cascades of the cindered boulders of further eruptions, where Mother Earth is so scorched that nothing will grow for



LOOKING DOWN INTO A LAKE OF BOILING, TOSSING LAVA AND BURNING SULPHUR IN THE CRATER OF "LITTLE VESUVIUS."

and barking of dogs, we set off with the blessings of the chief guide on a trip which he hoped would be sufficiently successful to inspire extra profit for himself.

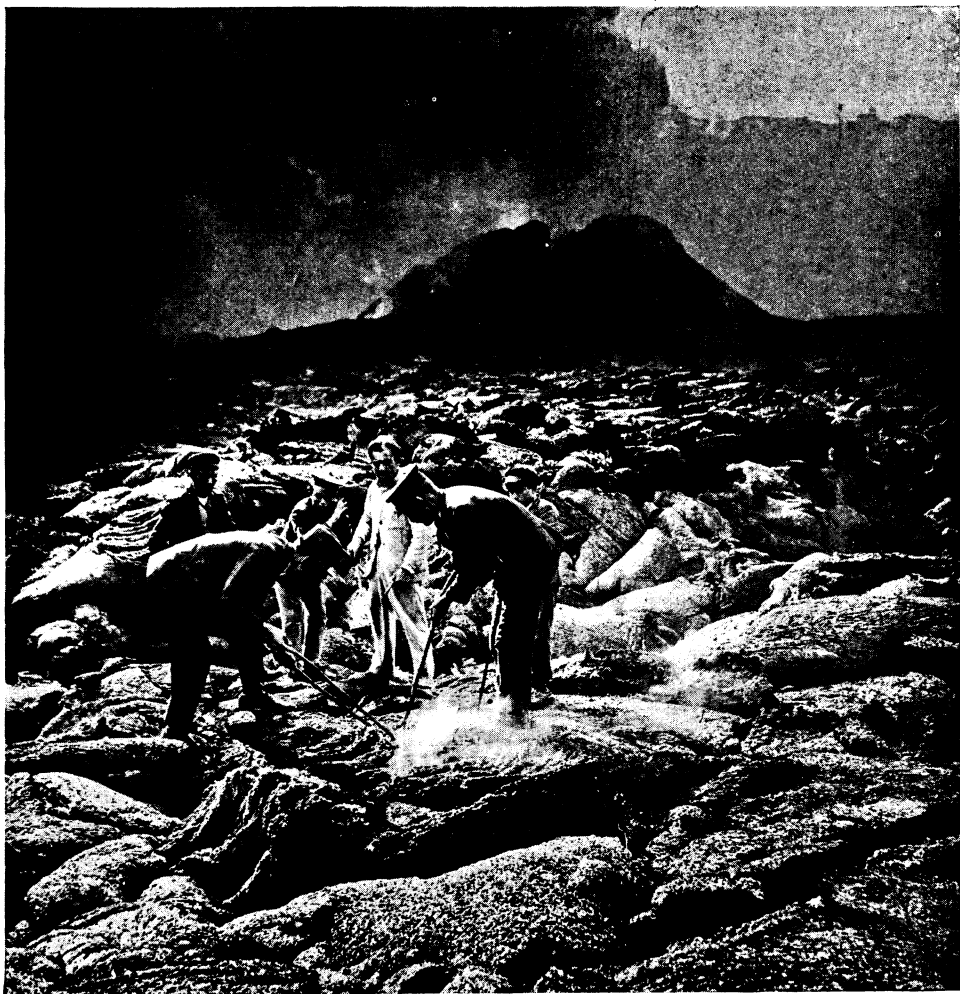
Up we went past orchards of figs, peaches,

one hundred years, through forests ringing with the shots of the early sportsman after bird, until we reached the bare bleak zone of twisted lava, where not a twig or blade of grass was seen. We walked over the fissure

where the earth opened up at 8 a.m. on April 8, 1906, and molten glowing liquid spouted out and ran down the slope, burying everything before it.

Now the ascent became steeper. Yonder could be seen many tongues of dark ropy lavas, which have been poured out for nearly two thousand years and as yet have scarcely

ancient crater—the rendezvous of hundreds of wild boar and other game—and with a blast one million times more powerful than that of Messines, blew the weaker half of the crater into pulverised dust, whose ashes, like those of Krakatoa in 1883, were carried half-way round the world. We gained the summit, and, to our delight, the thundering



PLAYING WITH LIQUID ROCK WHICH WELLS OUT UPON THE CRUST OF LAVA IN THE CRATER.

begun to fill up the gap in the crater wall of Monte Somma, which was blown out in A.D. 79, when the elder Pliny lost his life. Just as unseen hands with tons of explosives blotted out in one second the German positions on Messines Ridge, so Nature's unseen forces, after decades of gathering steam and lavas, in one moment blotted out the tangled forest of copsewood filling this

inner cone was belching forth lava clots and hurling its vapours in one straight line far above, revealing in their entirety, not only the outer crater walls streaked with bright yellow and reddish patches from iron and sodium chlorides, but also the whole of the black crevassed lava floor and the inner cone surrounded by smoking streams of viscous lava.



We commenced the perilous descent, rendered more difficult by our heavy apparatus. We soon had to spread apart, for at each step an avalanche of loose pumice stones, lava blocks, and ejected materials hurtled down, making it the more dangerous for

on the crater floor several hundred feet below. After four hours he reappeared over the edge of a crevasse in the lava, to our utter astonishment and intense relief.

We thus all eventually reached the crater floor in safety, after strenuous and fatiguing



THE MASS OF MONSTROUS ROPE-LIKE COILS OF SULPHUR EJECTED FROM THE INNER CRATER.

us to descend in close proximity to one another.

We separated, but this separation nearly cost the life of one of our members, who, in order to avoid continual avalanches of stones and lava blocks, moved away and got lost in a maze of ledges. In descending he missed his footing, and only miraculously escaped from being hurled to instant death

work, often slipping quite twenty feet amid a shower of boulders, pumice stones, and scorïæ. Our guides, testing carefully, preceded us over the dangerous viscid mass. The heat from each crevasse was almost overpowering. Even our sticks burst instantly into flame if we dipped them into the streamlets of white-hot fluid lava at our very feet.

We were able, by using two sticks as a shovel, to detach some of the smoking, treacly lava, into which our guides pressed coins and brought them out encrusted with molten rock, which soon solidified. These lava "souvenirs" are afterwards sold to tourists at the top at remunerative prices.

Often the crevasses in the lava were as wide as many of those on the Aletsch or Morteratsch glaciers, but a fall into one would mean a kind of death very different from that entailed by a fall into a glacier. In fact, the heat from the lava crevasses was terrible, like blasts from a ponderous furnace, and when it is remembered that temperatures of 1000 degrees Fahrenheit and more are required to melt many of the rocks and minerals composing the lava stream, some idea can be formed of our sufferings on this blazing summer afternoon.

Owing to the viscid state of the lava, it was impossible to cross many crevasses, and detours had frequently to be made until our guides found other points at which we were able to cross in safety.

All the time our course was in the general direction of the lava streams trickling from fissures in the inner cone of Vesuvius. As we advanced, spasmodic gusts of gas were swirled around, making it necessary to don our gas-masks, and in returning from peering into the awful bubbling lava, I slipped and fell headlong on other smoking masses of it. Even to-day the thought of that moment gives me quite a turn, for had I fallen into a crevasse, that fall would have been my last.

All around were hillocks of ropy lavas, yellow-reddish in colour, piled high in fantastic shapes, as though some pirate chief had shipped some extra hundreds of feet of nautical rope, in preparation for a cruise longer than his wont. Ropes of several sizes and lengths were actually being made in front of us, as the tacky, viscid stream slowly flowed over terrace after terrace, pushed onward from this overflowing cauldron. The rising and inconstant wind, sweeping vast masses of smoke and deadly fumes in ever-increasing volume over a large part of the crater, made examination of these terraced hillocks dangerous.

Our guides urged us to abandon the trip, but we still climbed over crests and descended into valleys of ropy lavas, and at length, amid chokings and coughings,

although clad with gas helmets, reached the actual slope of the inner cone itself. The reverberation within the pipe of Vesuvius, as the molten lava rose in blisters and burst, was like artillery preparation on the Western Front. Every few seconds, with almost clock-like regularity, as in gunfire, a huge lava bubble or blister would form on the sea of liquid lava and burst with deafening roar, shooting out splashes of actual molten rock, accompanied by bursts of rushing steam and gases which were belched high until they were caught by the swirling wind and swept along the floor of the vast amphitheatre over which we had just perilously made our way.

Our guides refused to take us one inch nearer. Still we pushed on alone and reached within five yards of the terrible monster. It was impossible at times to make ourselves heard to one another. Deadly fumes were gradually eddying around us. At each mighty reverberation masses of stones and molten lavas could be seen being shot high into the air, some to go rattling down the throat of the volcano again, and others to be ejected on the sides of the cone and even on to the floor of the vast outer crater.

We were in deadly peril. As each blister of lava burst, all eyes instinctively followed the ejected materials, which showed up fiery red against the setting sun, which appeared intermittently behind the ascending fumes, casting a weird effect over the whole scene. Splashes of lava came down all around us with a sickening swish and thud, sending shivers down our very spines. A sudden gust of smoke caught our photographer as he was adjusting his gas helmet, and his hat went sweeping into the actual fiery mass, where it was instantly devoured.

Thrilling views of the belching mouth of the volcano, taken nearer than any previous expedition had exposed plates or film, were obtained. Blisters which swelled up and burst with a deafening roar can be seen in the photographs. The danger every minute became greater. Still, we were there to get pictures, and we finished our series as blinding and suffocating fumes swept towards us.

The ascent from the crater floor was even more thrilling than the descent, as the exit is opposite the point at which we entered, and is a sheer precipitous climb of several hundred feet up the steep crater wall of slag, clinkers, and scorïæ.

Up this precipice on all fours we scrambled in a deadly race against asphyxiating gases which were gradually filling the vast enclosure. Ten minutes after we reached the lip of the outer crater wall the whole vast expanse was filled completely with choking vapours, so that had we not climbed strenuously, it is doubtful if we should have reached safety without suffering casualties. Never were troops who passed through a gas or artillery attack more thankful than we were when at last we gained the summit and threw ourselves down, utterly exhausted, on the cinders and ashes.

It was over an hour before we could muster enough strength to walk through the soft ashes and scorice to our mules and load up our precious film and plates. Picking our way down over the lava fields, we cast a last glance backwards at the treacherous monster which, after lulling peaceful dwellers into false security, bursts forth after varying periods into renewed activity.

As we reached vegetation's edge, with its first hardy pines, the sun was setting behind the wind-tossed mantle of smoke and fumes which, extending for miles, filled the whole landscape with weird, fantastic shapes. Slowly night came on, altering the uncanny shapes to fiery figures darting upwards like demons with flaming tongues. Darkness changed the whole column of smoke into "a pillar of fire." We beheld Vulcan's gigantic forge, under forced draught, shooting flames and incandescent cinders skywards amid vast billows of blood-red gas and vapours. Thus again Vesuvius awoke.

That night as we lay in our comfortable beds in Naples—the first we had seen for several days, and the last we were destined

to see for many a weary hour—and looked across the peaceful Bay of Naples to the fiery mountain, which was again in action, we were pleased to get the report that our film and plates were unaffected by the various gases through which we had passed, as the samples, when developed, proved to be of first-class quality.

"Vesuvius in eruption!" The cry spurred us again to the summit by quickest method—the funicular. Larger and denser masses of gas and vapours were being belched forth, filling the whole of the outer crater. Sharper sounded the reports of the bursting lava blisters in the inner cone, now almost completely hidden in suffocating gases. Amid the mutterings of Vesuvius came the report that Etna had broken out.

As I pen these lines beneath the mighty giants of the Bernese Oberland, having climbed and seen the dark ashes from Etna, blown to Switzerland, standing out against the dazzling whiteness of the permanent snowfields, I reflect for a moment on these terrible Mediterranean monsters, Vesuvius and Etna, both in fresh outbreaks, on Stromboli in constant eruption, and Vulcano heated up to 1112 degrees Fahrenheit, and ready to burst forth in terrible explosive blasts at any moment; on the mighty Andean chain and Fujiyama shaking those fair cities of the Far East, Tokio and Yokohama, to absolute ruin, causing as many casualties as all the other earthquakes of the Christian Era, and I wonder if there has been a year since man appeared on this planet more marked by destructive earthquakes and volcanic activity than the year 1923; in which I set out to secure a comprehensive series of photographs of volcanic phenomena.







"Wake up, man, an' look at this! Can ye let Red beat ye now?"

# WHITE HEATHER

By K. R. G. BROWNE

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

IT was as he sat in his corner, placidly submitting to the ministrations of his seconds, the adjustment and inspection of his bandages and the accomplishment of the various other preliminaries, that "Crab" Fairburn saw the girl in the ringside seat. She was leaning slightly forward, gazing up at the ring, and the fierce white light of the arc lamps revealed every line of her face. After his first glance Crab remained frankly staring, for he had never seen anything so completely beautiful. Those who occupy ringside seats at important fights are not normally noteworthy by reason of their good looks, and this dark-haired, dark-eyed girl stood out from her exclusively masculine neighbours with a startling distinction. Crab could not take his eyes from her.

He was still gazing when the ring emptied, the bell clanged, and his chair was jerked

from under him. As he came back to earth and advanced with the peculiar sidelong shuffle to which he owed his nickname, the thought uppermost in his mind was that the sooner he finished the fight, the sooner he might discover her identity. He decided, therefore, to close the proceedings as soon as might be.

But on this point Larue, the Frenchman, had views of his own. Crab Fairburn's deadly right hand had proved the downfall of many good men, and Larue had no intention of submitting tamely to its caress. Agile as a cat, his long, bony arms weaving in and out with the speed of light, he slipped about the ring like a lump of quicksilver, content to devote this first session to a reconnaissance of the ground. Crab, shuffling rapidly in pursuit, found no opportunity worth the taking. The round ended with both men untouched.

Back in his corner, with Dan McKechnie savagely belabouring the atmosphere with a towel, Crab let his glance slide downward again. The girl was still gazing up at the ring, but presently she turned her head and spoke to the man at her side. By the battered nose and little bright eyes of this personage, Crab was overjoyed to recognise one Joe Dexter, a mighty heavy-weight of two decades back and very good friend of his own. Even as he drew comfort from this discovery, the girl looked up again and met his eyes, and in that instant Crab grew abruptly weary of this foolish business that held him from her acquaintance.

Accordingly, when the bell clanged again, he came from his corner with a sliding rush so completely at variance with his customary habit that the Frenchman was momentarily surprised. Only momentarily, but long enough. Crab, leaping forward, glanced at the region of his opponent's heart and shifted his left shoulder. Instinctively Larue's guard fell slightly, and as it did so Crab's wicked right flashed across to the side of his jaw. Larue spun sideways, seemed to hang so for a fraction of time, dropped to his knees and thence flat upon his face; thereafter, save for a vague twitching of his legs, he moved not at all.

Crab, paying no heed to the applause of the crowd or the congratulations of his retinue, shrugged himself into his dressing-gown, ducked under the ropes and departed rapidly for his dressing-room. With him went Messrs. McKechnie and Webster, respectively trainer and manager of the rising star of the light-weight world.

"Yon was just great," said Dan McKechnie happily, as Crab sank into a chair and held out his hands to be ungloved. "Man, that right hand o' yours should be in a musee-um!"

"Good work, Crab!" said Mr. Webster approvingly. "Good work! I'll be signing you up with Red Doherty before you know where you are."

But Crab, like another and more eminent person, cared for none of these things.

"Tell me, George," he said abruptly, "who's that girl with Joe Dexter?"

"Girl?" returned Mr. Webster. "Search me. I didn't notice her. Why, are you——"

He broke off as the door was flung open and there entered the bright-eyed, broken-nosed figure of the gentleman under discussion. Behind him was apparent one at sight of whom Crab sprang

to his feet and stood whole-heartedly staring.

"Boy," cried Mr. Dexter, advancing across the room, "that was the neatest thing I've seen in ten years! You had that Frenchman guessing all the way. You've sure got a winner here, Dan." He glanced back over his shoulder. "Biddy, come here and meet the next light-weight champ! This is a niece of mine, Crab, and a darned good girl at that."

Crab Fairburn, mumbling incoherencies, stood fervently clutching a small hand and gazing down at a small, flower-like face.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Fairburn," said Biddy Dexter. "That right of yours is a terror, but it seems to me you're apt to leave yourself too wide open when you start in."

"Listen to her!" roared her uncle proudly. "There's not much Biddy don't know about the game, and that's a fact! Better listen, Crab!"

"I'm listening," said Crab, smiling.

"Sorry to interrupt ye," came the dry voice of Dan McKechnie, "but this coming champ's due to be rubbed down this minute. Time later for all the talk ye need."

"Come away, Biddy," chuckled Joe Dexter. "No good arguin' with a Scot. Crab, look in and see us some time."

"I will," said Crab.

No one observed that upon the rugged brow of Mr. McKechnie there had been born a faint but obstinate frown.

## II.

THE frown was there again a month later, when Dan McKechnie, idly tapping the punching-ball in a corner of the big barn that served as a gymnasium in Crab Fairburn's training-quarters, held Mr. Webster in converse.

"Twenty years I've been in the fight game," said Mr. McKechnie, "an' I've never seen any guid come of a felly mixin' boxin' wi' weemin."

"She certainly has him going," admitted Mr. Webster, knocking the ash from his cigar, "but it won't do him any harm, Dan. She's a nice girl, and he's keener than ever now."

"Aye—now. But ye canna tell wi' weemin. One minute butter'll no' melt in their mouths, an' the next they're awa' up in the air aboot naething at a'. I tell ye, George, I'm feared for the lad. He has a temper, as ye know, an' by all the tokens she's the same. If he was to quarrel——"

Mr. Webster laughed sceptically. He was a plump, comfortable soul, prone to take life easily except in matters of finance.

"Dan, you've been crossed in love or something. You're a—what's the word?—a misogynist. You let the kids alone. That girl's a good thing for Crab. Johnny Degan won't have a dog's chance against him."

"Well, ye mind what I say," grunted the misogynist, administering a fierce blow to the ball by way of emphasis. "I tell ye Crab's chance o' the championship just hangs on yon lass. I know Crab." He broke off as the latter, capped and sweated for the road, came into the barn.

"Show a leg, Dan, you ham-handed Highlander!" said Crab cheerfully. "Can't wait for you all day."

"Wait, is it?" retorted Mr. McKechnie. "Here's ten minutes I've been wonderin' if ye were sleepin' yet."

The two figures, one tall and lean, the other short and stocky, left the barn and set off at a steady jog-trot up the high-road.

The past few weeks had wrought a considerable change in Crab Fairburn. Formerly a somewhat taciturn, unsmiling youth, he had of late developed all the symptoms of one who has suddenly discovered the true jolliness of life. From the date of his victory over Larue to the time of his retirement into training for his meeting with Johnny Degan, the home of Joe Dexter had known him as a constant visitor. Mr. Webster, in remarking that Biddy had him going, had spoken a true word. Crab had never met anyone like Biddy before, and he had not needed a second encounter to convince him that all other girls were to her as candles to the sun. He entered upon his next period of training with a whole-souled enthusiasm that rejoiced even Mr. McKechnie's somewhat horny heart, and caused Mr. Webster to indulge in golden dreams. The fact that Biddy declined to be blinded by his achievements, and persisted in pointing out his weak spots, served only to spur Crab to greater efforts. Mr. Webster openly delighted: only Dan McKechnie declined to throw up his hat.

Even Dan McKechnie, however, was well content when, a fortnight after his conversation with Mr. Webster, he led Crab forth from his dressing-room to battle with Johnny Degan. Crab was fitness incarnate; his eyes shone, his skin glowed, his powerful muscles rippled to his movements in a manner that boded ill to his adversary. He

was as perfect a fighting-machine as Dan's skill and his own enthusiasm could make him.

In the passage leading to the ring there hove into view the vast figure of Joe Dexter, grinning encouragement.

"Good luck, boy," said Mr. Dexter. "Watch his left."

"Where's Biddy?" said Crab.

Mr. Dexter grinned again.

"Coming round after. Said she couldn't run the risk of seeing you beaten."

"Beaten!" snorted Crab. "I'll show her how I get beaten! I hoped she'd turn up, though," he added less buoyantly, and passed on.

But as he sat in his corner, absorbing Dan McKechnie's final advice, one of his seconds slipped under the ropes and pressed something into Crab's bandaged palm.

"A lady sent it," said the second, and withdrew grinning.

Crab's face lit up with a great light and he looked at Dan McKechnie.

"What's yon?" asked the latter, peering suspiciously. "A bit o' white heather, is it?"

"For luck," said Crab, slipping it into his right glove. "Go away, Dan, and pray for Johnny Degan. He'll need it."

Mr. McKechnie was compelled to admit the truth of this forecast when, barely two minutes later, Johnny Degan reclined upon his back in the middle of the ring, while the house rose as one man to yell its approval of the pile-driving punch that had sent him there.

While yet the joy of the audience was in full blast, Crab had shaken the hand of his semi-conscious victim, slid into his dressing-gown and was hurrying from the ring. Dan McKechnie, following at his heels, saw through the open door of the dressing-room a slight feminine figure and heard her cry of greeting.

"Oh, Crab, you beat him?"

"I beat him, Biddy," said Crab Fairburn, extending his hands to Mr. McKechnie. "Thanks to this," he added, as from his right glove there fell to the floor a crushed little sprig of white heather. And there was that in his eyes, as he looked at her, before which even Dan McKechnie, misogynist, felt vaguely abashed.

The abrupt eclipse of Messrs. Larue and Degan brought speedy results. Mr. Webster, armed with this proof of his *protégé's* quality, immediately got busy. The name of Crab Fairburn, always reasonably prominent in

the sporting pages, began now to be accompanied by cartoons and photographs. More than once it was coupled with that of Red Doherty, the champion. "If," said the sporting pages, "Fairburn maintains his present form, his meeting with Doherty cannot be long delayed. That is, of course, if Fairburn can overcome the opposition presented to his upward progress by such sturdy fighters as Tommy Rees, Spike Murnane, and Harry Anderson."

True enough. But the gentlemen named did not figure as opposition for long. Mr. Webster, than whom no more astute manager ever haggled over a purse, fulfilled his function, and Crab Fairburn did the rest. Tommy Rees endured for almost three minutes before Crab's right hand connected with his chin: Spike Murnane lost consciousness in half that time; Harry Anderson left his corner and was carried back to it practically in one movement. The sporting pages grew almost lyrical; the cartoons grew almost recognisable; "One Round" Fairburn became a celebrity.

Mr. Webster went about with a beaming countenance. "Where's your grouching now?" said he to Dan McKechnie. "This is all that girl's doing. She's *made* him, man!"

"Maybe," said Dan McKechnie.

"She's a great girl. That sprig of heather's a fine idea of hers, Dan. You might say that Degan, Rees, Murnane and Anderson were all beaten by a bit of heather. It's just the thing to work with a boy like Crab."

"Maybe," said Dan McKechnie, "but a' the heather in the world won't help if—"

"I'm after Doherty now," crowed Mr. Webster, "and I'll bet what you like I'll have him signed up inside a week. The papers won't let him out of it."

And within a week it was so. Red Doherty, like all champions, exhibited a marked reluctance to risk his title except upon terms calculated to guarantee him a serene old age. But public opinion, as represented by the sporting pages, is a powerful lever, and the acute Mr. Webster proving amenable from a monetary point of view, Mr. Doherty, after much wordy bartering, graciously consented to "knock the block off the kid." A date was set, and Crab went into training again.

And then, one week from the day appointed for the battle, Destiny stepped in with a large flat foot.

### III.

MR. WEBSTER, entering the gymnasium one sunny morning, paused for a moment to watch Crab at work with one of his sparring partners. Presently, as he gazed, a faintly astonished frown came over the manager's face, and he crossed the barn to Dan McKechnie's side.

"Dan," said Mr. Webster, "what's wrong with the boy?"

"Ah," said Dan McKechnie, "so ye notice it?"

"A blind man could notice it. There's no snap about him. He might be an old man, the way he moves. He was all right yesterday. What is it? Indigestion?"

"Indigestion!" Mr. McKechnie's tone was concentrated scorn. "No, it isna indigestion, George. 'Tis yon girl!"

"Biddy? But what—"

"It's just as I feared," said Dan McKechnie, with a kind of gloomy triumph. "Ye canna tell wi' a woman. Naething would suit the lad but that Joe and the lass should come down and see him at work. Yesterday they came, as ye ken. Last evening, after they'd gone—an' they went kind o' sudden, seemed to me—I noticed Crab sittin' kind o' glum an' quiet, an' I spoke of it. 'What ails ye?' I says. 'Feeling queer, are ye?' I says. 'Or is it maybe somethin' to do wi' the lass?' Crab, he looked at me the way I was sorry to see. 'Dan,' says he, sort of hard an' bitter, 'I'll be glad if you'll not mention Miss Dexter to me again!' An' never a word more. Man, they've quarrelled. 'Tis as plain as your neb, an' that's plain enough in a' truth."

"But," said Mr. Webster, ignoring the affront to his most noticeable feature, "what did they quarrel about?"

"How'd I ken? I wasna there at the time. An' it's no' advisable to ask. Ye canna be sure what a lass'll quarrel aboot. Ye can only be sure she'll quarrel aboot *somethin'*. Well, I'll just hae to try my best an' trust to Providence."

As time wore along, however, it was borne in upon Messrs. McKechnie and Webster that Providence was unwilling to oblige. Crab Fairburn continued to follow faithfully all the details of his accustomed routine, but it was only too clear that his heart was no longer in it. He became more silent and unsmiling than he had ever been; developed a habit of staring into vacancy, and seemed to have lost all interest in the fight of his career. His boxing was

technically faultless, but there was no spring behind it; his eyes were clear with health, but there was no keenness in them. Dan McKechnie, growing daily more worried, devoted much of his spare time to the cursing of all womanhood.

Mr. Webster grew worried also, and showed it. As the time at their disposal dwindled, he held frequent consultations with his colleague. "I'm scared stiff, Dan," said Mr. Webster finally. "Here's the fight only three days off, and look at him!"

"I'll awa' to town an' see the lass. Maybe I can mak' her see reason. Ye canna tell wi' weemin, an' I canna mak' things any worse."

"She's not the sort you can talk over," said Mr. Webster doubtfully.

"No harm in tryin'," said Dan McKechnie firmly.

Noon of the following day found Mr. McKechnie hammering upon Joe Dexter's door. The latter, appearing in answer, showed no surprise at sight of his visitor.

"I was expectin' you, Dan," said he, "but I'm afraid it's no go. I've tried, but



"Aye," said Dan McKechnie sombrely. "As things are, he's as much hope o' beatin' Red as I have of bein' made a duke. His boxin's as good as Red's now, but Red's a fighter. He'll half kill the lad wi'out we do somethin'. Losh, to think a felly could be so set on a girl!"

They brooded for a space. Suddenly Mr. McKechnie slapped his thigh. "By gum, I'll try it!"

"What's that?" queried Mr. Webster eagerly.

she won't listen. The boy's takin' it bad, I reckon?"

"He is that. What did they quarrel over, Joe?"

A faint but undeniable grin dawned on Mr. Dexter's battered visage. "Porridge, Dan."

"Parritch?"

"Aye. After supper it was, the day we

came down to see you. They were talkin' of this an' that, and Crab says the thing he hates most in the universe is porridge. So Biddy says it's her favourite, an' Crab laughs at her an' says it's kids' food. So Biddy up an' says she likes it because it's good for the manners, an'—an'—well, that's how it was. One thing led to another, an' next thing I knew, Crab was stammerin' wi' rage, an' Biddy haulin' me out of the house an' away to the station."

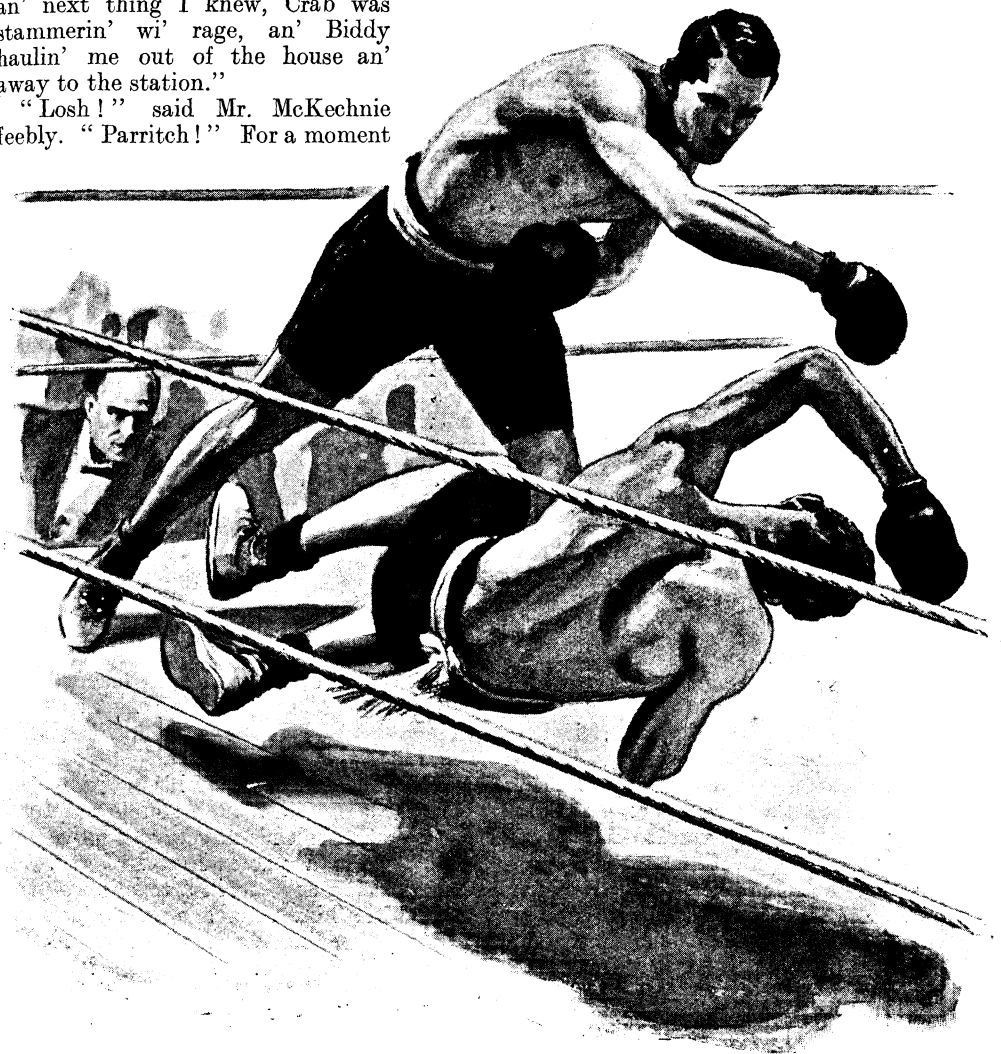
"Losh!" said Mr. McKechnie feebly. "Parritch!" For a moment

very slightly, and surveyed him with thinly-veiled suspicion.

"Mornin', Miss Biddy," said Dan McKechnie. "'Tis a fine day."

"It is," returned Miss Dexter. "Did you come to tell me that?"

"I did not. I came to speak to ye aboot Crab Fairburn."



"Mr. Doherty went to the floor in a kind of sidelong dive, and there lay."

he dwelt speechlessly on the perversity of Fate; then he rallied gamely. "I'd like a word wi' the lass, Joe."

"In the garden, Dan. I'll leave you to it, though I doubt you'll have no luck."

Miss Biddy Dexter, seated beneath the solitary tree, a book upon her lap, glanced round at Mr. McKechnie's step, flushed

"I'm not interested in Mr. Fairburn."

"But I am, Miss Biddy. That's why I came."

"Did he send you?"

"Heaven forbid! He's no idea I'm here at a'. Miss Biddy, could ye no' send the lad a wee word?"

"Why should I?" said Miss Dexter calmly.

"If ye could see him at this minute, ye'd no need to ask. He's clean broken up, an' that's the truth. I canna get him to tak' interest in his work. It's cruel to see him sittin' by an' starin' at naethin'."

"Dear me," said Miss Dexter. "Mr. Fairburn seems in a bad way. But what has it to do with me, Mr. McKechnie?"

"I suspicion it's a lot to do wi' ye, Miss Biddy. Mind ye, Crab's no' said a word, but I'm no' blind. A word from ye'd set him on his feet again. He's fit enough, but there's no spirit in him. The way he is now, Red Doherty'll just naturally knock him endways Thursday night."

Miss Dexter rose and began placidly to move towards the house. "I'm sorry you've had your journey for nothing, Mr. McKechnie."

"Come now, Miss Biddy," said Mr. McKechnie desperately, "what's a few words about a thing like parritch compared to——"

"If," said Miss Dexter, "Mr. Fairburn isn't good enough to beat Red Doherty, he doesn't deserve to. Good morning, Mr. McKechnie."

Three minutes later Dan McKechnie, out in the street again, looked back at the house and scratched his left ear savagely.

"Gosh darn all weemin!" said Dan McKechnie bitterly.

#### IV.

THURSDAY night saw the big hall packed to its doors, for the Doherty-Fairburn clash had been boomed, discussed and settled in advance during the past week by every sporting page in the country. Red Doherty's volcanic personality, lavish self-advertisement and cataclysmic methods had gained for him a large following, while the circumstances of Crab Fairburn's headlong invasion of the championship class lent a further interest to the occasion. In referring to the contest that morning, only one London paper had omitted to speak of "A Homeric Encounter."

But for Messrs. McKechnie and Webster, leaving the dressing-room in the wake of their charge, the glory of the moment was overcast by a dull sense of impending disaster. The last few days had seen no change in Crab's condition. Melancholy wrapped him as a cloak, and the approach of his life's crisis seemed to mean little to him. Moodily he stalked down the gangway, moodily

ducked under the ropes and went to his corner. Equally moodily Dan McKechnie followed. But the latter was not one to give in without a struggle, and as he bent to massage Crab's muscular legs he made a last effort.

"For Heaven's sake, boy, *fight* him! Ye'll never keep him out else. Try an' forget your troubles till ye've done the job! Remember a' that hangs on it, an' *fight* him! Pull yourself together, Crab, an'——"

"All right, all right," said Crab testily, and glanced aside as a terrific uproar heralded the arrival of the champion.

Red Doherty was a long, lean, wiry individual with a prognathous jaw and hair like a flaming bush. He owed his eminence in his profession less to his boxing ability, though that was considerable, than to the fact that he was apparently built of granite. No punch had yet been discovered with power to hurt him, much less knock him out. He had the arms of an ape and the shoulders of a middle-weight; these, combined with his thin, spidery legs, lent him a somewhat laughable appearance. But not one of his long string of opponents had laughed more than once.

Mr. Doherty, ensconced in his corner amid a horde of satellites and waving cheery greetings to friends at the ringside, proceeded expertly to prolong the preliminaries, for, though possessing no nerves himself, he was fully aware of the effect of suspense upon the nerves of others. At last, however, he acknowledged himself ready; his satellites departed, the bell sounded, and the fight was on.

Dan McKechnie, from his position just below the ring, saw Crab shuffle out from his corner, touch his adversary's glove and shuffle back a pace. Red Doherty, his inferior teeth exposed in a terrorising grin, went after him with a peculiar dancing motion, swaying from the hips like a sapling in a gale. His long left arm snaked out; Crab countered neatly; Dan McKechnie sighed his relief.

The relief, however, was not of long duration. As the seconds slid by, it became increasingly apparent that Crab's soul was not in his work. He was boxing beautifully because he was incapable of boxing badly, but there was no fire behind his punches. They had upon Red Doherty the effect of snowflakes upon a hot frying-pan. Mr. Doherty's dance-step quickened; his left hand stabbed in and out with the remorselessness of a piston. Crab, blocking and

ducking and side-stepping with a mechanical perfection, remained on the defensive; his sleep-inducing right was nowhere in evidence. He continued, in fact, to box flawlessly, but he was not fighting.

Mr. McKechnie, frowning horribly and biting his lip as he watched, was aware of a low moan at his side, and turned to face Mr. Webster. The manager's face was pale and the end of his cigar a ragged pulp.

"He's done, Dan," said Mr. Webster hollowly. "He's not trying to fight. He—ah, look at that!"

Red Doherty, desirous of the kudos attaching to a one-round victory, was forcing the pace. His left hand flashed out and caught Crab upon the side of the head, sending him rocking sideways; Mr. Doherty, following up, repeated the offence with his right. Crab staggered a little, jumped back and caught a third blow on his glove.

"It's pitifu'!" said Dan McKechnie. "He'll no' keep that up for long. Red's got his number. It's only a matter o' time now. An' to think that a' this is brought aboot by a lass an' a——" He started violently, spun round and poked Mr. Webster fiercely in the shirt-front. "Man, I've an idea! Awa' wi' ye an' get me a wee bit heather! *White heather!*"

Mr. Webster goggled at him.

"White hea——" His eye brightened with comprehension. "Gosh, Dan, you're going to try——"

"I'll try anythin'!" snapped Mr. McKechnie. "The lad's beat else. Awa' wi' ye, man! Ye've no time to lose, for he'll no' last."

"But where'll I get——"

"Losh, George, dinna stand haverin' there! Try yon market across the road, an' hurry, I tell ye!"

Mr. Webster opened his mouth, closed it, turned and rushed away as the bell signalled the end of the round.

Dan McKechnie, vigorously towelling the ether, noted with satisfaction that Crab was unmarked and breathing gently.

"Boy," he whispered, "ye're doin' fine. But ye've got to get after him! Keep him out this round, an' maybe——"

The bell cut short his counsel.

Red Doherty had devoted the interval to earnest thought. He had been annoyed to find his best punches wasted on the air or caught on a glove, and when he was annoyed, Mr. Doherty was dangerous. He decided to go in and mix it. Experience of Crab's punching powers assured him

that, all rumours notwithstanding, there was nothing to fear on that score.

So he went in and mixed it. His fiery head gleamed as he hurtled across the ring; his gap-toothed grin widened; he fell upon Crab with both hands working like trip-hammers. Crab could not keep him out. Red Doherty came on remorselessly, utterly heedless of damage to himself, leaping in, rocking Crab on his feet with a hail of vicious short-arm punches, springing back as Crab made to clinch, and leaping in again to repeat the dose. The hammer-like blows smashed through Crab's guard and drove him back against the ropes, which was precisely Mr. Doherty's intention. His left glove sank into Crab's stomach; involuntarily Crab's head jerked forward. Red Doherty's right smashed home upon his chin. Crab reeled back, swayed against the ropes and slid thence to the floor. As the house rose, bellowing wildly, the referee began his deadly counting, and at the word "Eight," as Crab got feebly upon one knee, the bell sounded.

Dan McKechnie, working over his man with the fury of despair, observed the lump below Crab's eye, the angry patches on his heaving ribs, and almost wept. He was about to try the effect of curses as a restorative when he became aware that a pug-nosed sportsman in a dingy sweater was calling him by name.

"Catch 'old, Dan!" said the pug-nosed sportsman, and thrust something up through the ropes into Dan McKechnie's hand.

"The saints be praised!" said Dan McKechnie, and shook Crab urgently by the shoulder. "Wake up, man, an' look at this! Can ye let Red beat ye now?"

Crab, blinking stupidly, turned a dull gaze on the sprig of white heather in his trainer's palm. For perhaps five precious seconds he stared; then he started convulsively and looked up. Dan McKechnie's soul rejoiced at the glitter in his undamaged eye.

"She—she sent it?" said Crab hoarsely.

"Aye," said Mr. McKechnie. "Will ye let her down *now*?"

Crab drew a long breath; his whole frame seemed to stiffen and fill out.

"I could do with some more of that sponge, Dan," he said.

One of the handicaps that make existence so difficult is Life's disconcerting habit of taking unexpected turns. Red Doherty, prancing out for the third round, was justifiably convinced that the fight was in



his pocket. He saw Crab Fairburn heave himself up and come slowly forward, blinking and swaying a little on his feet; Mr. Doherty grinned amiably and went light-heartedly in to finish him. Two seconds later a stinging left shot out of nowhere and snapped his head back; almost simultaneously came a stunning right that knocked him clean across the ring. Mr. Doherty was momentarily dazed; but he was an old hand and a courageous. Perceiving that some error had crept into his calculations, he pulled himself together and prepared to fight back. But the blinking, swaying figure was now transformed into a species of human cyclone. Mr. Doherty, battling gallantly, was forced to give ground before a storm of punches compared to which his own previous efforts had been mere love-taps. He was given no chance to recover from his initial surprise; Crab, pursuing him toe to toe and punching with the monotonous speed of a machine-gun, staggered and dazed him with a continuous volley of half-arm jabs and tooth-loosening upper-cuts. Red Doherty's defence, never his strongest point, broke down completely. As he felt the ropes at his back, he swore inwardly and let loose a left hook guaranteed to knock a hole in a brick wall. Crab moved his head neatly from its path; Red Doherty's glove hummed past his nose. Before Red Doherty, thrown half off his balance by his own energy, could regain his poise, Crab Fairburn released his celebrated right hand. It whirled up like a bullet and smote Mr. Doherty upon the exposed side of his jaw. Mr. Doherty went to the floor in a kind of sidelong dive, and there lay. . .

The rugged countenance of Dan McKechnie, hurrying away from the ring, wore an expression curiously compounded of delirious joy and grave apprehension. As he reached the dressing-room door, he

became conscious of one who spoke his name, and turned to see Mr. Webster hastening towards him. The manager was plainly hot, cross and out of breath; he panted audibly and upon his brow was perspiration.

"So it's over, eh?" said Mr. Webster jerkily. "Poor boy! Did Red hurt him badly, Dan?"

"Hurt him?" said Mr. McKechnie. "*Hurt!* Man alive, Red Doherty's senseless yet! Where were ye that ye didna see Crab put him out? 'Twas your bit o' heather did it, George." He sighed. "But I doubt we'll have trouble wi' the lad when he hears, for a' we did it for the best."

Mr. Webster's jaw dropped. "My heather? Wh-what d'you mean, Dan? I didn't—"

There was a brief, tense silence; then Mr. McKechnie gripped him by the shoulder. "That wee bit o' heather, George—did it no' come from *you*?"

"Me? Gosh, no! I tried my best, Dan, but where's a man to get white heather at this time of night? What on earth—"

But Mr. McKechnie had turned away and flung open the door of the dressing-room. On the threshold he halted and stood as if welded to the ground. The room held two figures. One was that of Miss Biddy Dexter; the other wore a dressing-gown and boxing-gloves. Their attitude suggested a somewhat touching belief that they were the only people in the world.

For a brief period Mr. McKechnie stood at gaze. Then carefully he withdrew into the passage, carefully closed the door and took Mr. Webster by the arm.

"Come awa', George," said Mr. McKechnie. "Yon's no place for us, an' we'd best keep the boys out, too. Losh, if that don't beat all! Ye canna tell wi' a woman, an' that's the truth!"





"But he never did look around, never took his eyes off Nig and the track."

# THE END OF THE TRAIL

By HARRY ESTY DOUNCE

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

AT every station up the line from Plutarch, more news of the great excitement in Thorpeville came surging on board our train. At Plutarch someone had shouted to the conductor that bandits had robbed the Thorpeville bank a couple of hours before. At Ward's Mills noisily talkative men with guns began getting on. The robbers had come, they said, in three or four automobiles, and had killed the bank watchman and got away clean as a whistle. At Tyler it appeared that the Thorpeville folks had shot back at the robbers and thought they'd peppered some of 'em. The Ward's Mills delegation hoorayed and fiddled with their guns. But at Garfield we learned that it had been only one

automobile, and at Alders, next station to Thorpeville, that it had been stopped in Lucullus, twenty-five miles away, and the three robbers captured, and that Vint Black, the watchman, might live, but the doctor didn't think he would.

By the time the smoker was full, Queen and I were the only passengers from the city. The rest were local, bent on viewing blood-stains and nitro-glycerine wreckage, anyway; they were loudly disappointed when they heard that the thieves were gaoled. A number of the guns were rifles, for even Plutarch is not far from the Adirondacks and deer. Cars going our way were thick on the roads.

Queen and I didn't like it at all. We voted

those bandits infernally inconsiderate. We had been looking forward to this day for most of a year, had risen at three o'clock to take the train. Queen hated promiscuous petting, and many hands fondled her ears with nervous clumsiness. And probably Lyss Willis wouldn't want to hunt to-day, and the day, clouded and still, with half the leaves down and wet from mist, was going to be ideal.

But when we arrived, there was Lyss with his rig, wearing his old smoky hunting coat. The sight and scent of him cheered us up at once.

"I wasn't sure you'd feel like going out," I said, as we left the would-be posse behind and jogged up toward the village. All along the road were people showing one another what they thought were the marks of the robbers' tires.

"We'll go out, if you want," said Lyss, with a funny emphasis on the *want*. "But not for birds."

"Not rabbits?"

I hadn't got up in the middle of the night for rabbits and beagle music. Queen, as a Llewellyn and a lady, of course held "fur" beneath contempt.

"No, not rabbits, neither."

"What else is there?"

"Consid'able. Understand, y' don't need to go if y' don't want. I wouldn't blame ye. But me and Ben Scroggs, we kind of wisht y' would. If y' do——"

Ben Scroggs was the Thorpeville constable. Lyss was handing me something—buckshot cartridges. But he frowned for silence until we were out of hearing of some boys.

"Now, look," he said. "Them fellers must ha' knowed the lay of the land. They didn't come this road. They left their car on the gulf road, crossed the crick, and crawled up through the willers to the bank. They prised the bars off a window. Two climbed in, the other two stood guard front and back——"

"The other two?"

"Yes, but don't holler it. They was four in all."

"But——"

"Wait. The two inside blowed the big safe open. Vint come downstairs, rubbin' his eyes, and got shot. They wasn't much light in there at half-past four, but he made out that the man that shot him had on a felt hat. The rest had caps. They had han'k'chuffs over their faces."

"But——"

"Wait. They'd used blankets to smother

the noise, but it woke up us near-by. Ben and me, we'd both had the bank on our minds ever since they built it in a tomfool place like that. He grabbed his old '38-55 and slipped out his back door. I got my rifle. We was both in our nightshirts, under stand. Ed Black, Vint's brother, lives nearest the bank, and he was up already and come with a shot-gun. It ain't so safe to rob a bank where everybody hunts."

"Well?"

"The man in front shot at Ed, and Ed flopped in the ditch—says he couldn't ha' reached him with shot. The other one hurried around. I couldn't see much from where I was then, but I took a lick and smashed the bricks behind 'em. Then they decided Thorpeville was goin' to be too hot for 'em, and them two and one from inside legged it for the car. Ben, he'd figured they'd go t'other way. Before he got straightened around, the willers hid 'em."

"They started their engine and waited for the fourth one. He was slow. When he come out, with a big sack of money and stuff, I was in the road, and he seen he was cut off. I dastn't shoot on account of the houses beyond, but I yelled to Ben, and sent one through the willers where I judged the car would be."

"That moved 'em along. The feller must ha' heard 'em go, in the wrong direction for him. He give up circlin' to join 'em, and headed east. Ben run back and waited till the feller got clear, then he shot twice—the first time high, o' purpose. The second time the feller was jumpin' over Knight's pasture wall. He scrooched along behind it and got away."

"Understand, nobody seen him but Ben and me. Ed was where he couldn't. He thinks Ben shot at the car. Only us two knows they was a fourth one, even."

"Did Ben hit him?"

"You never hunted deer with Ben. It wasn't three hundred yard. As near as we could tell when we went to look, he's over in the woods. We found consid'able blood."

"But what's the secret about him?" I asked impatiently. "Why haven't you——"

"This feller," Lyss said, watching me, "was the one that shot Vint, the one with the hat—a light grey hat, black band. And blue clothes, funny light green-blue, as if the color'd faded. And yaller shoes. That don't convey nothin' to ye?"

I shook my head.

"Get-ups like that common in the city?"

"Common as dirt, if you mean what they call nigger blue."

"Ain't noticed any special?"

I hadn't. Why? Who did Lyss think it was?

"Wouldn't accuse no man without I had proof. Best way'll be to slip over and see. Will y' come?"

"I don't know that I've lost any bandits with automatics," I demurred. "Why not get a crowd together and—"

"That's what we don't want. Wouldn't be nothing left of him when they found him. Never knowed how popular Vint was till he was shot. If you come, it'll look like we're huntin', and, besides, we'd like for you— There can't be much risk. He's lost a lot of blood."

We turned into Lyss's yard. Ben Scroggs was waiting, a very sober look on his brown moon face.

"Is he comin' along?" he demanded.

Lyss referred him to me. I nodded—I was in for it, apparently. "I wish, though," I said, "that you'd tell me who it is. Lyss talks as if I knew him."

"We ain't dead sure. That is, we are, but—" Ben rubbed Queen under her chin. She approved of Ben. "We'll want a dog," he said.

"She's no good for that."

"She ain't, I know. (How be ye, old girl? Too bad to sp'ile your fun.) Suppose you step over to Uncle Billy Thorpe's and borrow that little Nig of theirs. Tell him you're after woodcock. If we go, they might suspect."

"But Nig wouldn't trail a man."

"He'll trail the one we're after."

"I don't believe he'd trail any man," I said, "except Uncle Billy himself, or Will, of course."

"He'll trail the one we're after," Ben insisted.

And then I saw what they were driving at—saw, even to the light grey hat and the blue suit and yellow shoes. Good old Uncle Billy Thorpe, the last of the Thorpes after whom Thorpeville was named, had a grandson Will, whom some people distrusted. The Thorpes were a stock given to marrying young, and when Uncle Billy's daughter had died, Uncle Billy and Aunt Ellen had taken her baby, saying good riddance to its father, who disappeared.

I had always liked what I had seen of Will. It was true that as a youngster he had been obstreperous, stealing apples and stoning pigs, and playing hooky from

school, and so on, but not more than other youngsters.

As soon as he was old enough, Uncle Billy had sent him to the Lucullus Normal School. And now Will was twenty, had been graduated from the Normal School in June, had a sweetheart in Lucullus, was wild to be married, and had come down to the city a few weeks before, preceded by a quaint letter that Uncle Billy and Aunt Ellen both had signed, asking my help for their boy in finding a "position."

He had come to my office, dressed—I now remembered all too clearly—as Lyss described the man we were to hunt.

"But it can't be, Ben! You're crazy!" I ejaculated.

"'Fraid not," said Ben. "I wish we was. He was jest his size and build—run like him, too. They'd been expectin' him up to-day—he was comin' for over Sunday, and his girl was comin' to visit 'em. Aunt Ellen told Berthy friends of his'n might bring him in a car."

"But if he was going to rob a bank, why on earth would he choose the one here, and do it in clothes that anyone would know?"

"That does seem queer. He's reckless, though—his father was before him. And he'd know how easy this bank would be to rob. Seemed a good, promisin' boy to me. Heaven knows, I didn't like to shoot!" Ben added, with a shiver. "Oh, well, we'd best start. You git Nig."

But the last thing I wanted to do was to borrow Will's dog for this purpose. I had known Uncle Billy a long time. He had taken me out with my first real gun, had taught me how to fish for trout with an alder pole and worms, and still, whenever I came, he and Aunt Ellen would load me up with eggs or pears or honey, for which it hurt their feelings to try to pay.

"Couldn't we track him ourselves?"

"Might—might not. Could if he was a deer—dunno 'bout a man. Anyways, if Nig'll foller the track, that'll clinch it. I've knowed him to find him six mile from home when he'd gone off huntin' and left him."

"I'll go with ye, if you'll do the talkin'," Lyss offered. "I know how y' feel."

"All right, and I'll drive round," said Ben, "and meet ye at the woods."

Queen, tied in the barn, grieved after us. Lyss took his rifle in its case. Uncle Billy was out in his orchard among the hives—a tall, stooped, patriarchal figure, with a big Walt Whitman beard that his tobacco habits

yellowed, and his spectacles up on his forehead. He was glad to see me.

"Want some honey? The buckwheat you like ain't good for much this year, but the clover's nice. Stop in 'fore y' go—come for supper, you 'n' Lyss, if you're back by six o'clock. Will'll be here—he'd ought to be here now—and he'll want to make y' acquainted with Mary Lou—she's jest as sweet as young girls git to be! You've heard about our robbery, I guess? Mother, she was worried for fear the robbers'd come across Will, until we got the word that they was caught. Don't fergit the honey, or I'll have t' send it to ye."

"You bet I won't, Uncle Billy," I said, feeling like a murderer. "We're going up the swales for woodcock, and we wondered if we could take Nig."

"Nig? Why, if 't wa'n't that Will's comin' to-day, y' could and welcome. He'll look for Nig fust thing. What's the matter with Queen? I noticed y' had her along."

"She—she's got a sore foot. A man stepped on it on the train. I don't want to work her lame, if I can help it. We'd bring Nig back by noon."

"But he wouldn't be no use unless y' had him on a leash, and then y' might's well walk up the birds for yourselves. He won't mind only Will or me. He's like a baby, sp'iled."

"We'd like awful much to take him, Uncle Billy," Lyss put in.

I don't know how my lies had sounded. Lyss's simple truth was a give-away, his tone would have hanged an archbishop on general principles. Uncle Billy looked sideways at him.

"Funny you need a dog, either of ye," he said. "You'll both git all the woodcock you're entitled to, if they're there. Still, I don't like to say 'No,' boys. If 'twas any other day—What gun y' got there, Lyss?"

He felt the barrel in the canvas case, the lean octagonal rifle barrel with the magazine tube underneath. "That ain't no bird gun. That's yer Winchester, ain't it?"

Lyss flushed a deep, boiled red. He tried to laugh out something about having picked up the wrong gun, about the robbery and the shooting having left him all mixed up. The old man turned an inquiring gaze on me.

"It's this way, Uncle Billy," I said desperately. "We're not going after cock. There were four of those robbers, and the fourth one ran for the woods. Ben Scroggs shot at him and thinks he hit him. We're

going to look for him. Ben didn't want even you to know—a lot of young fellows are talking big, and if they get wind of it, Ben's afraid they'll try to lynch the man. That's all. Queen wouldn't track him. We thought Nig might."

"That's right, Uncle Billy, so help me Heaven," said Lyss.

"But Nig won't do it."

"Mind if we try?"

"No use. He ain't no bloodhound, boys. He's half cocker span'el 'n' half terrier—he'll work on birds, but that's all."

"We'd like awful much to try him, though," Lyss insisted.

It was then, I think, that Uncle Billy knew. If he did, he gave no sign. He stood there a minute with his old eyes shut, rubbing the side of his head, but he often did that when he was cogitating. Then he felt in his overalls pockets and found his plug, and deliberately whittled off a piece of it.

"All right," he said. "I'll come with ye. Nig won't mind no one but me. Ben—Ben thinks he hit this man, you say?"

He called little bright-eyed Nig, who came bouncing joyously. He cut down Aunt Ellen's new clothes-line to make a long leash.

"What in the world you up to, father?" she challenged from her pantry window, and Uncle Billy beat us both at ready lying.

"Jest goin' a piece with the boys, t' show 'em where I found some birds. When Will comes, you tell him I'll be right back."

We made room for him on the wagon seat between us. Nig rode in his lap, the terrier blood absurdly pricking up one spaniel ear, and *roufed* at the chickens and fellow-dogs we passed. Some boys, with sticks for pistols and rags tied over their faces, were playing in a roadside shed.

"Hey! There's Uncle Billy goin' huntin'!" one boy shouted. "Goin' after robbers, Uncle Billy? Give 'em fits!"

Uncle Billy was always friends with boys. He evidently didn't hear. He went on working a burr out of Nig's scrubby coat.

Lyss tied his horse up the gulf road among the willows, and led the way across the creek and over through the fields. Uncle Billy had Nig in his arms. I could see the crowd around the bank, a quarter of a mile behind us.

"Jest put him down here," said Lyss. shoulder deep in the boneset and golden rod along the Knights' stone wall, "Jest put him down and let him smell around."

Nig smelled out a chipmunk, to begin

with. He squealed to be loosed that he might dig down the wall. Uncle Billy dragged him back, cuffed him, talked to him in a low tone that we couldn't overhear, trudged along and put him down again where someone had gone through the tall wet weeds not many hours before.

Immediately Nig snoofed and rowfed and capered. Lyss and I looked at each other. We had hoped he would pay no attention to the scent, and plainly he knew it and was overjoyed. But at first he kept stopping to bark, twitching his black button of a nose in a disapproving way, like a testy old gentleman served with a stale egg. He would make up his mind and burrow ahead, pulling Uncle Billy after him, and then where the track seemed clear enough he would stop and bark some more.

"Go on, boy, find him!" Uncle Billy would call, and thus by halts and starts they went on, along the wall, through a barbed-wire fence, down into a close-cropped hollow where sheep had pastured, on through the rail fence around a stump lot and in among its brush piles and blackberry thickets.

I brought up the rear with Lyss. As we left the corner of the wall, he picked a fern leaf and handed it to me. Part of it was splotched and puckered brown. Every few steps beyond he pointed with his rifle to similar splotches on leaves or sticks or grass. I should have overlooked them. I wondered if Uncle Billy with his naked eyes could see them.

"Ain't much doubt," Lyss whispered. "Nig knows."

At the moment Nig was hanging back and scolding. I questioned with my eyebrows.

"It's the blood. Been some every place he's stopped. He don't know what to make of it. Poor Uncle Billy!"

Our progress was slow. Uncle Billy stumbled a good deal. Twice, as they jumped rabbits, Nig had to be restrained and kept to business. Near the woods a partridge roared up from a frost-grape tangle, and the little dog went crazy.

"Ne' mind him," Uncle Billy reproved. "We ain't a-huntin' now."

A road meandered along in the edge of the woods. "Oh, there y' be!" Ben Scroggs called, and came running. He had something beside his rifle in his hands, but when he saw Uncle Billy he dropped it behind him. Too late. Uncle Billy had looked around, all three of us had seen it—a light grey hat,

in the season's nobbiest mode, with a black band.

Uncle Billy hardly checked his stride. I thought he nodded at sight of the hat, but he was rather loose-jointed, and it may have been only a joggle of his head. He crashed on into the undergrowth after Nig. We waited for Ben.

"It's his'n. Got his initials punched in the leather. What in time did y' bring the old man for?"

We explained as Lyss unbuckled the case of his rifle.

"Well, it'll kill him. 'Twould, anyways, though, and mebbe he'll see the boy alive. If he's alive, I'll 'rest him and we'll drive him straight to Plutarch, and nobody in Thorpeville needn't know till he's locked up. Better spread out now—can't tell what he might do. It won't be far, from the looks."

But it was a good half mile, and seemed ten times more. We spread out, Lyss at one side, Ben at the other, each with his rifle poised for a quick shot. They took pains to outflank all the windfalls and clumps of young hemlocks. I carried my gun on my shoulder, rather than have Uncle Billy look around and catch me ready to shoot. But he never did look around, never took his eyes off Nig and the track, which sometimes only a dog or an expert woodsman could have followed, and sometimes was plain, scuffed in the yellow leaves. Nig was running it without hesitations now.

For a while it led strongly, through brush and over knolls. It crossed a fallen tree; the clothes-line leash got caught, and I ran to help Uncle Billy free it, and saw him pick a few threads of blue cloth off a snag. He rubbed them with his thumb and finger, wiped his steamy spectacles to look, Nig whining impatiently. He sighed and mopped his head with his bandanna as he went on. He was getting tired. I could hear him pant, and Nig's tugs pumped his arm as a plough handle would.

"Let me take him away," I suggested. He didn't know it. I don't think he knew I was there.

The track began to seek easier going. It wandered down hill to the gully where big hemlocks still stood thick. Lyss went into their twilight circumspectly. It turned and followed what had once been a corduroy road. Here the fugitive's feet had slipped off the remaining mossy poles. Two or three times they had sunk in the bog between. Once he had fallen, and there the stains on the moss made quite a patch.

Lyss, among the hemlocks, kept abreast of us like a shadow, jumping from root to root, poising after each jump to peer ahead. Ben worked his way through a thicket. A red squirrel berated us, blue jays drifted along in the tree-tops and screamed. For all that, the dripping woods seemed horribly still. Uncle Billy's bald head hung and rolled with his strides. But he kept on, so fast that I had to flounder to keep up with him.

The hemlocks gave place to alders, the gully widened out into a swale. We were nearing Deep Pond, where Thorpeville used to cut its ice. The roof of the old ice-house showed above the bushes now and then. That ended any hopes that I was clinging to. Our quarry must have known of the shelter there, and made for it as his strength had given out.

A woodcock rose, then another and another—woodcock in that swale you almost never found, because the mud harboured few worms for them, and the swale was so close to the village and was hunted every day. There was something ironic in the whistle of their flight and our letting them go unregarded. Even Nig, the rattlebrain, whose speciality was cock, took no interest in their scent. I wanted to shoot, both barrels, and wake us up from an ugly dream—to tell Uncle Billy and the others, and myself, we had come only for birds.

But Nig was intent on a track that wobbled drunkenly, and the drops that marked it were many and still red.

We came out on firm, open ground along the pond. An early settler had lived there. His apple trees survived him, with yellow nubs on their scraggy branches. The ice-house stood in plain sight, its door a patch of blackness, its crazy walls riddled with knot-holes and cracks through which a man could fire. We halted. Ben pulled Uncle Billy by the sleeve. Uncle Billy shook off his hand and went right on, headed for the door, heedless of Nig's attempts to stick to the weavings of the track.

"He'll pot us, if he wants, when we're nigh enough," Ben warned. "Say we swing around and——"

"Oh, hell!" said Lyss, and followed Uncle Billy. We all did. There was nothing else to do. A kingfisher sped from the roof with its rattling cry and made us jump. For one, I had crawly sensations as little nerves rehearsed how a bullet would feel.

I never had thought of Uncle Billy as a religious man. If he had been a churchgoer,

he had given it up long before. I knew he could curse on occasions in a quiet way, and had a moderate appetite for the fiery yield of a block of hard cider frozen. The only wickedness I had heard stir him to moral indignation was that of another beekeeper who adulterated his honey by feeding sugar to his bees. So I thought he had tripped when he dropped on his knees a few yards from the ice-house door.

"Lord," he said, "Lord, if it's pleased ye t'—t' let Will do this thing——"

And he couldn't go on, not out loud, at least. We waited. It seemed a year. Ben hawked and spat, Lyss muttered to himself. I wiped the mist off my gun-barrels, and wished more than ever that I had stayed in town.

At last we stepped over the door-sill at Uncle Billy's heels.

There was daylight enough through the cracks to show us a still, stiff figure down on the rotten sawdust close to the wall, with its feet toward the door. It was dressed in the light blue suit, in shoes that had been yellow before their plungings into mud. The coat was half off. One hand held it together as if for warmth. A pistol lay by the other. Strips of undershirt told how the boy had tried to stop the bleeding, to tourniquet the hole through his shoulder that he couldn't reach. As long as he could, he had sat up against the wall, waiting. And now he was dead.

I remember having time to think it was a mercy that he was, in the instant before Nig sniffed of his hand, just once, and turned away—before Uncle Billy, without even going to look closely, said, "*That ain't Will,*" and we others sprang to look.

They were right. It wasn't. It was a stranger to us all, a hard-looking customer with a broken nose and short red hair.

"Thank God!" Ben cried, for Ben had fired the shot.

"What ye thankin' God for?" demanded Uncle Billy in a shrill and quavering voice. "It ain't him, no—but they've killed him and stole his clothes! I been mistrustin' it might be this. I tried to think 't would be all for the best, so long's he hadn't done it, robbed the bank and wounded Vint. But I can't give no thanks! My little boy, Nell's baby——"

"But mebbe he's alive, Uncle Billy," said Ben.

"Yes!" said Uncle Billy, with wild scorn. "Mebbe he's alive—mebbe he give that devil his clothes, made him a present of 'em

—his new clothes he bought with the egg money Mother give him, so's he'd look nice and git a p'sition! Mebbe he swooned away like a gal and let 'em take 'em off him —Will, that was strong 's a young bull 'n' could 've whipped the three of ye put together! Don't talk fool talk to *me*, Ben Scroggs! Lemme go back! I got t' git back. Mother, she'll want me when they fetch him in."

He tried to start, but he sank on the door-sill and propped up his head with his hands.

"I'll have t' set a minute," he said. "I'm

as to us, about the fine boy that Will was, always loving and respectful to his grandparents; and about the cunning fat baby he had been, and their promise to Nell to look after him and bring him up a decent-living man; and about little Mary Lou and how bad she was going to feel, and the babies, hers and Will's, that Uncle Billy and Aunt Ellen had hoped to live to see. He didn't choke up or whimper, just talked, quietly and clearly, as we lugged him through the woods. Lyss was snuffling. I'm not sure what I was doing. For hard as we tried to persuade him that Will might be



"*That ain't Will.*"

a-gittin' kind o' old. You boys run on back and look for him, an' you break it t' Mother, will ye? Tell her I'm a-comin' right behind—"

Luckily I had a flask. In the end we got him braced up and on his feet, and Lyss and I, being nearly his height, took him along between us with his arms around our necks, as a hurt football player is taken off the field. The stubby Ben went ahead with the guns and Nig. Long before we reached Ben's buggy, I knew that Uncle Billy was a heavy man, and must have been a son of Anak in his prime. He talked, as much to himself

safe and sound, it was perfectly true that no threat, even with pistol muzzles behind it, would have made Will submit to be robbed without putting up a fight, and—the dead thug back yonder who had robbed him had shot down Vint.

But why had he wanted the clothes?

"Would Will have much money on him, Uncle Billy?"

"Don't think so. Five, ten dollars and his watch."

"That was a strikin' suit, though," Lyss said valiantly. "You seen him in it, didn't ye?"



"It was very becoming," I said.

"Yes, sir, it looked nice on him," said Uncle Billy, with tragic pride. "His grandma, she thought 't was a mite too loud at fust. But she changed her mind. Say, now, you boys mustn't take no offence at nothin' I've said—you were all good friends to him, I know. Jest let me walk by myself a piece. I'll make out——"

But he couldn't. Even in the buggy he had to be held. Little Nig, understanding in a doggish way that his old man's heart was broken, put his forepaws up on on his shoulder and tried to lick his face, and Uncle Billy's gnarled fingers caressed him shakily as he told him over and over that they wouldn't see Will no more. It may be only maudlin to read about—it was very bad indeed to have to hear. Lyss escaped that part of it, having left us and crossed to the gulf road to get his rig.

And then we were back in the village, nearing Uncle Billy's place, and it looked as if there must have been another robbery there—all Thorpeville seemed to be gathered in the yard. Everybody was talking at once, boys and dogs were adventuring rashly among the beehives. Through the wood-bines around the porch I caught a glimpse of Aunt Ellen's white head.

"Well, they've fetched him in," said Uncle Billy.

But Nig bounced right out over the wheel and scuttled into the crowd. His dry *rouf! rouf!* pierced the hubbub. A mighty whoop answered, the crowd was bucked asunder, and here came Will—Will, in old torn shirt and trousers, with a bandage on his head, a roast chicken's drumstick in one hand and a pretty and painfully rosy little girl pulled along by the other—Will, as large as life and most exuberantly natural.

Everybody laughed and shouted. Aunt Ellen waved her apron. Nig leaped to unbelievable heights—he captured that drumstick without a struggle and went on leaping with it in his mouth. And Uncle Billy, with a sort of gasp, sagged forward, and Will and others helped us lift him out and lay him on the grass. Then we stood over him, pushing Thorpeville back until he came to. But the centre of interest continued to be Will.

He was telling his story at the top of his lungs. All of them had heard it, but they jostled to hear it again.

"Left town about two—the fellows were going on up to Seventh Lake, so we started early. Car broke down near Plutarch,

couldn't raise a garage at that time of night. Finally I left 'em and walked; no train till the one you came on, and I wanted to s'prise the folks, wanted to be here when *she* got here——"

He flourished her arm by way of explanation, and turned her pinker and more confused than ever. But I noticed she didn't try to let go of his hand.

"Pretty dark, but I knew the roads. Down between Garfield and Alders I heard this other car behind me, and along it came and stopped. They asked which way to Thorpeville and how far. I said I was going there, and they whispered a minute and said, 'Jump in.' They didn't talk much and I couldn't see much. I was in front with two of 'em.

"The two behind flashed a torch on me, and I turned around to look. 'Sit quiet, Bo, this boat's too full,' they said. They flashed it again and grabbed my hat off. *Then* I wanted to get out right quick, but they were going too fast to jump. And then, I guess, they hit me over the head."

"The next thing I knew it was daylight, and I was in a box car, freezing cold, head aching fit to split. When I got my senses collected and saw where I was—it was that old car on the siding above Alders—I found some burlap sacks to keep me respectable, and came on. I'd like to know where the son-of-a-gun went that got my clothes."

"We can tell ye," said Ben, and told him, stirring the crowd afresh, and Lyss arrived with tidings that completed the sensation. The dead man was a convict escaped from the Parkersburg State Prison.

"Got over the wall last night," Lyss panted. "His friends was outside with the car. He was wearin' his stripes—they took Will's clothes for him."

"Robbed our bank to give him a new start in life, I guess," said Uncle Billy, who was sitting up quite chipper, fingering one of Will's trouser legs to be sure that he was real.

"What was he in for? D'ye hear?" Ben asked.

"Murder in the second. He was a bad one, they say."

"Glad of that, 's long's Vint's goin' to live. I'm partic'lar who I shoot. They comin' up from Parkersburg?"

"They're here. I met 'em and sent 'em to the Pond. They'd been telegraphin' and searchin' all over creation, except up here. Didn't think their man could ha' been in

this 'little bank job' of ourn, until the three at Lucullus was identified as his pals. I take it you'll git a reward."

"Wouldn't tech a red cent of it," Ben declared.

When the crowd had left us, most of it in the direction of the Pond, and Nig had hustled the last dog interloper off the premises, we went in and sat around the table while Will, with Nig's help, ate the rest of that cold chicken. Mary Lou was next him on one side, Uncle Billy on the other. Both of them kept touching him surreptitiously.

"Head ache now?" I asked him.

"Oh, some; not much. I can hunt with you, if you say, this afternoon."

"His head don't hinder his appetite," said Aunt Ellen, with satisfaction, bringing a cocoanut cake and a pitcher of milk.

Then she sat down and looked hard at Uncle Billy. "Father," said she, "when you started out this morning, did ye know that robber had his clothes?"

Uncle Billy blinked. The silence began

to be ticklish. Ben caught my eye and quickly looked away.

"You did," she accused, "or you wouldn't have took Nig."

"We knew it wasn't Will himself, Aunt Ellen!" I said, laughing, and Lyss and Ben chimed in with a stagey roar at my good joke.

"Course ye knew *that*! The idee!" returned Aunt Ellen. "But I want to hear from father. Did ye—know about his clothes?"

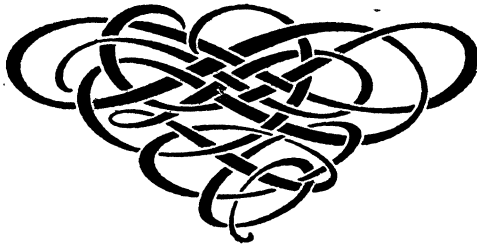
"I—yes, mother," said Uncle Billy.

"Then why the nation couldn't y' tell me? Cuttin' my clothes-line and leavin' me here to think all sorts of things!"

So that crisis passed. But in the afternoon, when Will and I and Queen and Nig were out and the woodcock were catching it, Will turned on me with a curious, rather quizzical expression.

"Honest to God, cross your heart, now," he said, "did you and Ben and Lyss and grand-dad think you were tracking me?"

There are times when a little perjury seems excusable.



## AT WESTMINSTER.

**A**T Westminster the dusk was blue,  
With yellow lights and passing feet,  
And suddenly I thought of you—  
The pang was bitter-sweet.

Bitter because I loved you still,  
And sweet because, in spite of pain,  
Millions have loved and millions will  
Love and be loved again.

At Westminster the thought of you  
Brought joy as strange as it was sweet,  
Simply because the dusk was blue  
Above the passing feet.

SYBIL RUEGG.

# AN OLD VALENTINE

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

MISS ISABELLA HARTLEY and Miss Betty Stokes were two light-hearted bachelor girls of four-and-twenty, old schoolfellows who bachelorised gaily together in 4B, Hammerton House, which is off King's Road, Chelsea. On the evening of the twelfth of February they went to hear "Lilac Time." Feeling dissipated and reckless, they went and had coffee and cakes at a *café* afterwards. So it was nearly midnight when they arrived at their residence, chattering about Schubert and things in general, and in particular about "Bob" and "Fred," who were the latest threats to the bachelor estate.

The discussions ceased abruptly at the front door, after each had waited for the other to open it.

"Where's your key, Bet?" Miss Hartley demanded sternly.

"Where's *yours*?" Miss Stokes asked reproachfully.

"You saw I had my silver bag," Miss Hartley protested. "I forgot to change the key into it. I thought, as you carried your old leather thing, your key was sure to be in it. That's where you profess to keep it, anyhow."

"I meant to bring *my* silver bag," Miss Stokes explained, "so I put the key in that. Then I picked up this one by mistake. I didn't tell you, because you say I'm always forgetting things. I'm no worse than you, really. They ought to have a caretaker living on the premises."

"Well," Miss Hartley observed, "they haven't. How are we going to get in?"

"That," said Miss Stokes, "is the question. Let's look if anybody's up."

They drew back to the edge of the pavement and surveyed the premises. The windows were in darkness, except one room.

"Gracious!" cried Miss Hartley. "It's old Stiff-neck's flat."

She meant J. R. Thompson, Esq., who inhabited 3B, the flat under theirs. He was not so very old—except to very young ladies—and his physical neck was

sufficiently mobile; but he was a stern, rather Mephistophelian-looking gentleman, "dour," as the Scotch say. The caretaker described him as "one that keeps to himself." The charlady who "did for" both 3B and 4B—visiting them at 9.0 a.m. and 10.15 a.m. respectively—had communicated to the Misses Hartley and Stokes a theory that "the gent in 3B" had been crossed in love. Anyhow, when she had mentioned the marriage of her fourth daughter, he had hinted that people who got married were fools. Further, he had spoken to her of "the infernal row" made by 4B's washing machine; had complained that they always "went at it" when he was having his bath. "That's why," Miss Hartley had said, "he always sings then! You might mention *that*, if he complains again."

She meant the remark as a joke, but the charlady—who had long since charred away any sense of humour—did not take it so. Neither did Mr. J. R. Thompson, when the remark was reported to him. He ceased to sing in his bathroom—only hummed. He also ceased to say "Good morning," though he still bowed, when he met his super-tenants on the stairs, and still held the swing-doors open for them when occasion offered.

"Old Stiff-neck is a gentleman," Miss Stokes once said, "but a forbidding one."

Therefore they would have preferred that any other flat than his had shown a light.

"It's his bedroom, too!" Miss Hartley groaned. "Even if he came down, just think how he'd look at us!"

"Let's throw stones at Miss Jones's window and try to wake her up," Miss Stokes proposed. "She's a cheerful old soul."

"Idiot!" cried her companion. "Where are you going to get stones?"

"That's the worst of asphalt roads," Miss Stokes lamented. "If we were in the country—"

"Then we shouldn't have gone to the theatre. I always say it's too late to have

coffee afterwards. . . . I'm going to shake and bang the door. I'm not afraid of old Stiff-neck, if you are."

She rattled the door and rapped it with her parasol handle. Miss Stokes kicked it and called out "Hi!" A friendly policeman crossed the road to them and belaboured the door with his truncheon. After considerable belabouring, 3B's bedroom window opened. His head came out. It looked satanic, silhouetted in the window frame.

"We're locked out," Miss Hartley explained.

"So I thought," he said grimly. "Who are you? I've no right to let strangers in, and I can't recognise you in this light."

"Miss Hartley and Miss Stokes," the first-named lady stated.

"We live in the flat over yours," Miss Stokes called.

"Oh!" he said. "The one with the washing machine." He drew in his head and closed the window.

The young ladies gazed at each other and gasped. "I call that a nasty, uncalled-for remark, under the circumstances," Miss Stokes observed warmly.

"Surely," Miss Hartley cried, "he doesn't mean that he won't come?"

"He's coming, miss," the policeman said. "I see the hall lights turning on. Sorry we shan't have the privilege of putting you up in a cell for the night! . . . Here he is. You'll be all right now. Thank you, miss."

The policeman walked on. The door opened, and Mr. J. R. Thompson appeared in a dressing-gown. He locked the door again and held the swing-doors open, but he did not speak.

"It is very kind of you," Miss Hartley acknowledged. "About the washing machine: we turn it to wash things, not to annoy you. We never do it while we hear that you are in your bathroom underneath."

"You never hear me now," he said.

"But we didn't mind," Miss Stokes declared. "We rather liked to hear you, didn't we, Bella?"

"Quite," said Miss Hartley. "So *do* sing when you feel like it. . . . How lucky you were up—I mean lucky for us!" She giggled; had a sudden spasm of daring. "Composing your valentine, perhaps?"

"I hadn't become acquainted with you ladies then," he said. ("Do you know," Miss Stokes observed afterwards, "I don't believe he's so stiff as he looks. I saw his eyes twinkle.") "I think I was rather mourning that I had no one to send a

valentine to. . . . Good night." He unbent a trifle, almost smiled. "I am glad to have been of this small service to you."

He went into his alley, and the girls went on upstairs, nudging each other.

"Really," Miss Stokes observed, when they were brushing out their hair, "he isn't such a bad old thing. I believe he's only glum because some woman served him a nasty trick, like Mrs. Jenkins says. It's made him a mis—mis—whatever is the word? It's the swanky one for a woman-hater."

"Misogynist, you mean. It was rather pathetic the way he said that he had no one to send a valentine to. I wonder if it would buck him up if anyone sent *him* one."

"Bella, what an idea! You *do* have ideas. Of course *we* could, but—they've rather gone out, you know."

"So has he! Old-fashioned, I mean."

"Um-m-m! He doesn't dress so badly, if you notice—in the daytime, I mean. I don't think he's old-fashioned enough to care for a heart with an arrow through it, with crinkly silver-paper edges."

"How about those verses someone sent you last year, after you turned him down? Cat! Was it Dick or Billy?"

"I think it must have been Jack. Someone before Fred, the final! Whichever it was, he went and got engaged within a month, so I don't mind using his old verses again. But they were meant for a woman."

"We might touch them up. They aren't so unfeminine. Women are more of men nowadays. Look at us! I'll buy some swagger paper, rough edges, and a swanky envelope, and you can write the verses. Yours is the best hand. . . . I don't believe valentines are quite out. From something that Bob said on Sunday, *he* doesn't think so. His point was that nowadays a man couldn't send anything worth having for a valentine unless he was properly engaged. What do you think?"

"I told you all along that it would come to it," Miss Stokes murmured. "Buck up and come to bed."

"Well, I warned you the very first time that you went to the opera with Fred! . . . Oh, don't put your cold feet on me, Bet! You've taken all the clothes. Pig!"

"There you are, then. Cat! . . . Oh, I'm sl-lleepy! Good night, dear!"

"Good night, old girl."

The two mischievous bachelor young ladies went to sleep—too soundly to dream of valentines. But they woke up mindful

and still mischievous in the morning. In the evening they posted a letter, somewhat furtively and with a considerable amount of giggling.

"The words are so suitable to anyone who's had an unhappy love affair," Miss Hartley remarked with satisfaction.

"A bit too suitable," Miss Stokes said. "When I was writing them out I couldn't help thinking that if Jack hadn't been such

Keeps her looks well; but I thought she seemed a trifle anæmic when I saw her in the Stores last Christmas. If I run against her this year, I really shall wish her the compliments of the season. It's too long to keep up a quarrel. I'd have said it last year if it hadn't been that she might have taken it for giving in. I don't suppose she bears me any malice, after nine years, any more than I do her. She looked very



"The policeman walked on."

an idiot as to take me at my word . . . Oh, let's go and have an ice!"

On St. Valentine's morning Mr. Thompson's post was late.

"I suppose," he grunted, "it's delayed by the contounded valentines, if they still go on. They were nearly finished nine years ago, when I last sent one. . . . Yes, it's nine years since Wish and I agreed to differ—well to differ apart instead of together. She was a regular little breeze. . . Time flies. I was forty a month ago, and Wish must be about three-and-thirty. Strange that *she* doesn't get married.

unapproachable, but very likely that was only because she felt like I do about it. The way we finished up was unfortunate—precluded friendship afterwards, although we ended the engagement by mutual consent. Sometimes I think the mutual consent was mutual folly, pig-headedness, especially as

there was no suggestion on either side that we really *wanted* to part. 'I don't pretend that I have ceased to care for you, Wish,' I said, 'but after the way you have treated me, as a self-respecting man, I must require some little overture from you before I can—

hulking great feet—before *I* make any overture! Overture, indeed! The fault is all yours! Yes, I was fool enough to like you, and—and women don't chop and change about like men. If you asked me to forgive you, I might be a fool again. . . . Jack,



"How lucky you were up—I mean lucky for us!"

er—you know what I mean.' My word, didn't she flare up! I can see her now, tearing her handkerchief in her hands and stamping her foot. What a tiny foot for a biggish woman! In some things Wish is big. . . . 'You dare! You dare! You'll have a grey beard down to your feet—your

aren't you man enough to take the blame? You must *know* it's entirely your fault? To say some little thing to do that?' . . . If I hadn't been so clear that she was entirely in fault—I'm clear of *that*, even after nine years—I *would* have said something. I was quite right not to; but I wish that—

that things had gone differently between us. . . . After Wish there's no other woman. . . . If we were only still valenting. . . . Here's the postman at last."

The postman brought several letters. Mr. Thompson opened all the business ones before he troubled about the envelope of beautiful thick vellum paper. He imagined that this held a money-lender's circular! As he had no need to borrow, he received the usual quantity of offers to lend, upon the usual ducal stationery and addressed in the usual alluring feminine "Society" hand.

When he glanced at the contents of the envelope—with his hands ready to tear them asunder and throw them in the waste-paper basket—he did not find a circular, but some verses in a dashing and distinctly attractive feminine hand, the same which had addressed the envelope. He gasped, and read them carefully.

#### TO MY OLD VALENTINE.

Give over sighing, dear, give over sighing.  
Present and Future both may fail our prayer,  
But all the past is safe from Fate's denying;  
We've always been whatever once we were.

Give over crying, dear. It's no use crying.  
Each ticking second Time will make his theft.  
A moment's living is a moment's dying;  
But that we lived the moment's always left.

Give over scorning, dear, give over scorning,  
Give over sharing blame as yours or mine;  
Just say of me, as I of you this morning:  
"A very pleasant men'ry, Valentine."

Mr. Thompson read the verses three or four times, then laid them down, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. That was just a gesture inherited from some ancestor whose exertion was physical. Mr. Thompson's exertion was mental.

"Wish's writing won't have altered as much as all that," he reflected, "and she wouldn't send it, not even if she wanted to. I wonder if she does? If I thought that. . . . Poor old Wish! Whimmy old Wish! . . . No, she wouldn't send it; and the writing *isn't* hers. It's from some mutual friend who'd like to reconcile us. Very nice of him or her. Or someone has sent it for a joke, possibly those nice lively girls upstairs. I hope they've their valentines, the little hussies. . . . No, the writing has a resemblance to Wish's, but she didn't send it. If she had. . . . Or if *I* had—to her. It's no use pretending that you've grown prosaic, unsentimental, bachelorised, too old. They're only poses to other people. There's always somebody you can't manage to feel prosaic, unsentimental, indifferent,

*blasé* about—somebody whom you're prepared to be a fool over. If Wish *had* sent it, I suppose I should have gone straight round to her. 'Suppose'! What's the sense in humbugging yourself? I *know* I should have! And if *I* had sent the verses—any bally verses—any bally white flag—to Wish. . . . The telephone bell, I expect. 'Is that you, Jack? Well, I've had your old valentine. It's rather nonsensical, isn't it? . . . Serious nonsense? Is it? . . . Wouldn't serious nonsense present his valentine in person? . . . Of course you may come. . . . Oh, Jack!' . . ."

Mr. Thompson set his mouth (another inherited gesture; descended from the ancestor who closed his teeth upon his enemy).

"Suppose I send her a copy?" he thought. "But she might take the verses as merely an *in memoriam* to a kindly remembered past, not as making a present suggestion, or only a suggestion that we should bury the hatchet and become on speaking terms. It is rather absurd to cut each other, after nine years. That's a more likely telephone message. 'Speaking' would begin from the old position, of each blaming the other. We need to be shocked out of that before it's any use being on 'speaking terms.' They're only squabbling terms. . . . The blessed valentine has shocked me out to this extent. I see that we were both to blame—anyhow, ought both to have forgiven, considering that we—well, we *did* have a distinct attachment to each other. We never even questioned that. . . . Two bally, pig-headed fools! That's how I see it now. But *she* mightn't look at it that way. She's the most obstinate little beggar I ever knew. It would take a lot to shock her out of that. It would be more of a shock if I went round and pretended to think that the letter came from her! By Jove, that's an idea! . . . It really is considerably like her writing. She couldn't swear I couldn't think it was, anyhow. Before she can get a word in—for the moment she'll be dumbfounded, if Wish ever is dumb—before she has a chance to say that the valentine wasn't from her, I'll get in that I wish *I* had sent it; take some of the blame; assume that she's ready to make it up. If she hesitates, she's lost. I shall grab her. . . . Ah-ha!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"I am surprised," Miss Wish Mason began, as she entered her drawing-room to greet her visitor.

"Don't fib, Wish," Mr. Thompson said rapidly. "You knew I'd come the moment I had your valentine."

"My *what*?" she cried; but he disregarded her and poured out a torrent of excited speech.

"I shall never forgive myself that I wasn't the one to send the valentine—the offer of peace. Do believe this, Wish. I've wanted to make it up all these years—wanted *you*, Wish, wanted *you*! When this came"—he held out the verses—"I could have kicked myself for my beastly pride. You have stooped and conquered. You—"

"But——" she gasped.

"Let me finish," he begged. "You have been the first to give in, but you aren't the only one to yield, Wish. I was to blame—more to blame than you. I own it, and thank you for—well, I may take your verses as—as ending our foolish quarrel, mayn't I?"

Miss Wish glanced from the verses to him, and back again to the verses. They shook in her hands.

"They read rather like it," she said. "I—I didn't write them—I mean I—only—only adopted them. I hardly thought you'd recognise my writing after all these years."

It was as well, Mr. Thompson thought, that she was not staring at him just then. He felt that he looked as astonished as—say, as a primitive and more expressive ancestor looked when he rounded a corner and came face to face with a bear.

"You own that you sent it, Wish?" he shouted.

"It doesn't seem much use denying it," she said slowly and rather tremulously.

"May I kiss you?" he clamoured.

"It doesn't seem much use saying 'No!'" she murmured shakily. "Oh, Jack, what a bad boy you've been, Jack!"

"The honour and glory of making it up are all yours, Wish," Thompson said presently, when, at Miss Mason's suggestion, they were "trying to behave like rational beings." "I don't want to detract from them, or to deny that the next time you are tiresome——"

"You won't have to wait long!" she declared.

"I'm sure! Next time it will be my turn to give in. I ought to have been the one to-day—any day these last nine wretched years. I wasn't; but I do want to say a word for myself, to show that there's some

give in me, and how much I wanted to make it up. I didn't really wait till you gave way, Wish. When I came to see you, I only seized upon the verses as an excuse. As a matter of honest fact, I didn't for a moment suspect that they came from you."

"As a matter of honest fact," Miss Mason said, "they didn't! I seized upon them as an excuse, too! There ought to be another verse. 'It's no use lying, dear—it's no use lying.' But it seems that it is."

"There's no lie about my wanting you, Wish, anyhow," he said.

"Or," she owned, "about my wanting you. I don't see that we were deceitful about it—at least, only a little—a little tactful. You know what I mean. But I'd like to have a verse about lying—it *always* comes out—to send to the person who sent you that old valentine!"

\* \* \* \* \*

When Mr. Thompson was going out to post a letter in the evening, he met Miss Hartley and Miss Stokes coming upstairs. They looked so profoundly innocent that he knew at once they were guilty. He shook his head at them. They drew close together for mutual protection, and laughed.

"It's no use lying, dears," he said, "it's no use lying!"

"It was only a joke," both declared at once.

"Joke!" he said. "It's played a very practical—rather pleasant—joke on me. It looked like the writing of a lady I used to know, and—well, now I know her again, and I'm going to know her better. We are getting married next month. The old valentine has done me in."

"Well, I never!" cried Miss Hartley. "That's ever so funny, because it's done Betty in, too. You see that ring on her engagement finger?"

"Yes. New?"

"To-day. You see, there used to be someone, but—well, last year he sent her those verses. She thought he had got engaged to someone else, but he hadn't. So she thought *she* would, but she didn't. When she was writing out his verses for you, she thought there was something in them—about—about people you used to like. So she just scribbled a line to him. 'Good wishes to an old valentine.' He came round to the office at lunch-time and took Betty out. Oh, they did look two simpering donkeys—if donkeys simper! They looked worse when they came back. The boss gave



her the afternoon off. The cashier told him how it was, and he was quite nice about it. Some old sticks of men aren't half bad, when you know them. But now I suppose you'll go in for being young? . . . They went and bought the old ring. Isn't it ripping? Hold up your hand, Bet! See what can be done by an old valentine!"

"Congratulations!" said Mr. Thompson. "He deserves something for composing the verses."

"He didn't," Miss Stokes said. "He couldn't make up poetry to save his life! He copied them out of some old magazine.

They are by a man who writes a lot of tosh under the name of Owen Oliver, he says."

"I wonder," said Miss Hartley, "if writers ever think how their old writings go round and round, and what a lot of mischief they do!"

"I have a good mind," Mr. Thompson declared, "to send him the story of what his wandering valentine has done, as a warning to him."

So here is the story; but I do not send it out as a warning, only as a wish—that someone would send on a fresh journey of reconciliation this little valentine of mine.



## CANDLEMAS EVE.

**T**HE fir trees swing, the fir trees sway,  
The eve it closes in misty and grey.

I lit nine tapers on Candlemas Eve,  
Where yon dusk fir boughs dip and heave;

Topaz yellow and sapphire blue,  
A-glimmer like stars in the gloaming dew,

Ruby, emerald and pearl-white,  
They lit the lone fir tree on Candlemas night.

Two as a rose which the summer has kissed,  
And two tear-dim as Love-in-a-mist.

All the wild things of the forest came  
And gambolled around the tapers' flame.

The branches bow, the branches bend  
Down silent aisles at the chill day's end.

While glimmer still these tapers nine,  
Bless Thou Love's offering at Thy shrine!

The fir trees swing, the fir trees sway;  
The night it closes in misty and grey.

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.



"She sank down on her knees before him."

# THE UNMASKING OF A CAVE-MAN

By ALEC WAUGH

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

**T**HINGS were not going right with Gladys Peterson. For a long while she had been suspicious. This afternoon she knew. She had actually found herself wondering whether, after all, she did so want to marry Harold. And two months ago she had been so certain. She had been certain, indeed, from that first moment when their eyes had met across Lady Hobson's crowded drawing-room. It had

been a dull party, the sort of party to which, at the end of a busy season, a harassed hostess invites those of her acquaintances whom she is conscious of having neglected during the previous weeks. It was an ill-arranged, ill-assorted party, where no one knew, or appeared to want to know, anybody else. And Gladys had reflected moodily, as she listened with a quarter of her attention to the opinion of a young man in the

Treasury on the probable effect on cotton of the falling mark, that such an evening was a poor preparation for the strenuous encounter with the last year's champion to which a local golf tournament had on the following day consigned her.

Then she had seen Harold. He was not handsome; he was not particularly young. His appearance was undistinguished. He went, she could tell, to an expensive tailor. His waistcoat was cut in the fashionable V and was made of the same *piqué* as his shirt and tie. But he was not well dressed. He was the sort of man that a great many women would not have taken the trouble to look at twice. But suddenly, unaccountably, miraculously, there passed between them one of those glances that recognise and accept the existence of an age-long intimacy; and that had never happened before to Gladys. She had had flirtations in plenty; young men had made love to her at dances and attempted, not always unsuccessfully, to kiss her in taxis as they drove her home; once or twice she had even imagined herself to be in love. Almost certainly she would have married Arnold, had not that chorus girl providentially, as she now felt, annexed him at the very moment when his attentions towards her had begun to be defined. But never before had she experienced that sudden unaccountable thrill, that intuitive knowledge "This is the man."

Out of the corner of her eyes she had observed his manoeuvres to extricate himself from the conversation of a retired but autocratic colonel. How long he seemed to be taking over it! Would he ever be free? Would that pause, that occasion for an inaudible murmur and a retreat, never present itself? At last! He was standing alone, looking round him with a worried, anxious expression, looking, she told herself, for his hostess.

"I am of the opinion," announced the young man at her side, "that a very considerable profit might be realised by selling postage stamps in bulk at a reduced rate. People would buy them in large quantities, as an economy, and proceed to lose them. It is, for example, a curious fact that two per cent. of the postal orders issued are never cashed. The profit on them is considerable. In the same way . . ."

But she was not listening. She was watching Harold as he bent forward to his hostess; she was noting the fatigued amiability with which Lady Hobson en-

deavoured to display some interest in his conversation; she was wondering whether he was asking to be introduced, or whether it was merely fancy, and they were just talking, for manners' sake, of indifferent things. And then they turned towards her: and for all her twenty-three years and her modernity, she found herself blushing like a Victorian school-girl.

"Gladys dear," she heard her hostess saying, "this is Mr Harold Wetherby." She had a moment of horrible fear lest her smile should become a simper. She was dimly conscious of the young man in the Treasury rising to bow stiffly, of Harold taking his place beside her, of an awful devastating silence, then of Harold's voice, gruff with an extreme nervousness—

"I wonder, Miss Peterson, whether you happen to know any of my friends."

## II.

THEY had met frequently after that, as people who wish to see more of one another contrive to meet by apparent accident at the houses of mutual friends. And Gladys found that she had not been deceived in her first impression; it was quite unlike anything that had ever happened to her before. She had never felt for anyone as she felt for Harold.

"I don't begin to understand it," she would tell herself. "I don't know what it is about him that attracts me. I don't even know how far as yet he does attract me. But I know some day he will do something or say something that will change everything for me, that will make me belong to him for ever."

She had expected that moment to come when he proposed to her, when for the first time he took her in his arms to tell her that he loved her. It had not come; but she had felt so certain that it would come in a little while, when he was less shy of her, that she had without hesitation accepted him. She had never felt more sure of anything than she had of Harold. And yet here she was, two months later, wondering whether she really did want to marry him.

It had not come, that moment of miracle, of revelation, and the days were passing. Had she made a mistake? she asked herself. Was he really that one man, he who would interpret for her and fulfil her nature?

She recalled the dismal details of the afternoon that was now passing into a twilight of late February. They had lunched

together, and had walked afterwards through the Park.

He had begged her to marry him at once. "What is there to wait for?" he had urged. "We've enough money, we know our minds."

But she had refused to bind herself. She was timid of the future. "Oh, but no, really no, Harold, I couldn't! The Spring? Why, it is only a couple of weeks off! I couldn't have begun to get things ready as soon as that. And, besides—oh, no, please, no!"

They had walked in silence for a while, and then, with averted face and in a low voice, he had said to her: "Gladys, I don't believe you really love me."

Instantly she had been all contrition. "Oh, but, Harold darling, how stupid of you! You know I do."

He had shaken his head. "If you really loved me, you wouldn't want to wait—you'd marry me to-morrow." It took a full twenty minutes to reassure him, and the effort had tired and a little saddened her. It was all wrong, she felt somehow. She shouldn't be persuading a man that she was in love with him. He should be telling her she was.

She rose from her chair beside the fire and, walking over to the window, gazed across the desolate garden of a London square. Dusk had fallen. The lamplighter had done his round. Curtains were drawn across the lighted windows of the houses opposite. A nurse was returning with her charges to the nursery tea and the fairy stories before the fire. In the half light the roofs and chimney stacks of London assumed momentarily a look of serene and tranquil loveliness. An hour of peace and benediction.

Half wearily Gladys raised her hands towards her head. "Oh, Harold, Harold," she said, "please, please make me love you!"

### III.

HAROLD WETHERBY was equally dissatisfied as he walked moodily that evening down Piccadilly towards his club. He realised that he was, in some way unknown to him, disappointing Gladys. His experience of women, although he had passed the middle thirties, was slight. He had not considered himself a ladies' man, nor, indeed, a romantic personage in any way. "A plain, uninspired, tolerably efficient Civil servant"—that was how he was accustomed to describe himself. He had never for a moment expected Gladys to fall

in love with him. When he discovered that she had, he accepted the miracle as heaven-sent and left it there. There was, he imagined, no more to be done about it. There would be a six months' engagement, then a marriage. Things would follow the conventional course. And Harold found himself sorely puzzled by Gladys's curious and unsatisfactory behaviour. Things were going wrong. Why or how, he knew not. In a state of grave disquiet he climbed the stairs leading to the smoking-room of the Albion Club.

In a far corner, partially concealed behind the current issue of *La Vie Parisienne*, Reginald Howard was in process of finishing his fourth large whisky and soda since five o'clock. He felt, that is to say, on companionable terms with life, and, in distinct contravention of the etiquette of clubland, waved a hand airily and invited Harold exuberantly to join him in a fifth. Harold declined. He disliked Howard—the sort of man who could think and talk of nothing except women, who had got elected only because the club was in need of members, and no one seemed to know anything about him, either way. Nonentities, he reflected, could get anywhere.

"Oh, but do," Howard was saying. "A short one, then. The brown sherry here, as you know probably a great deal better than I do myself, is admirable."

Harold hesitated. The smoking-room was empty. The man was persistent; it was difficult to refuse. Besides, he felt lonely, and, after all, even Howard's conversation was better than his own thoughts. He nodded.

"Admirable, admirable," said Howard. "One double whisky and soda, John, and one glass of that old brown sherry—Bristol cream I think you call it. And now, Wetherby, tell me all about yourself. I hear you're going to be married."

For a moment Harold paused; then, for a multiplicity of reasons that he was never able subsequently to disentangle, he proceeded to pour forth a full catalogue of his disasters. Howard listened with a magisterial attention. There was nothing more flattering to his vanity than the solicitation of his advice on women. On that subject he considered himself to be an authority.

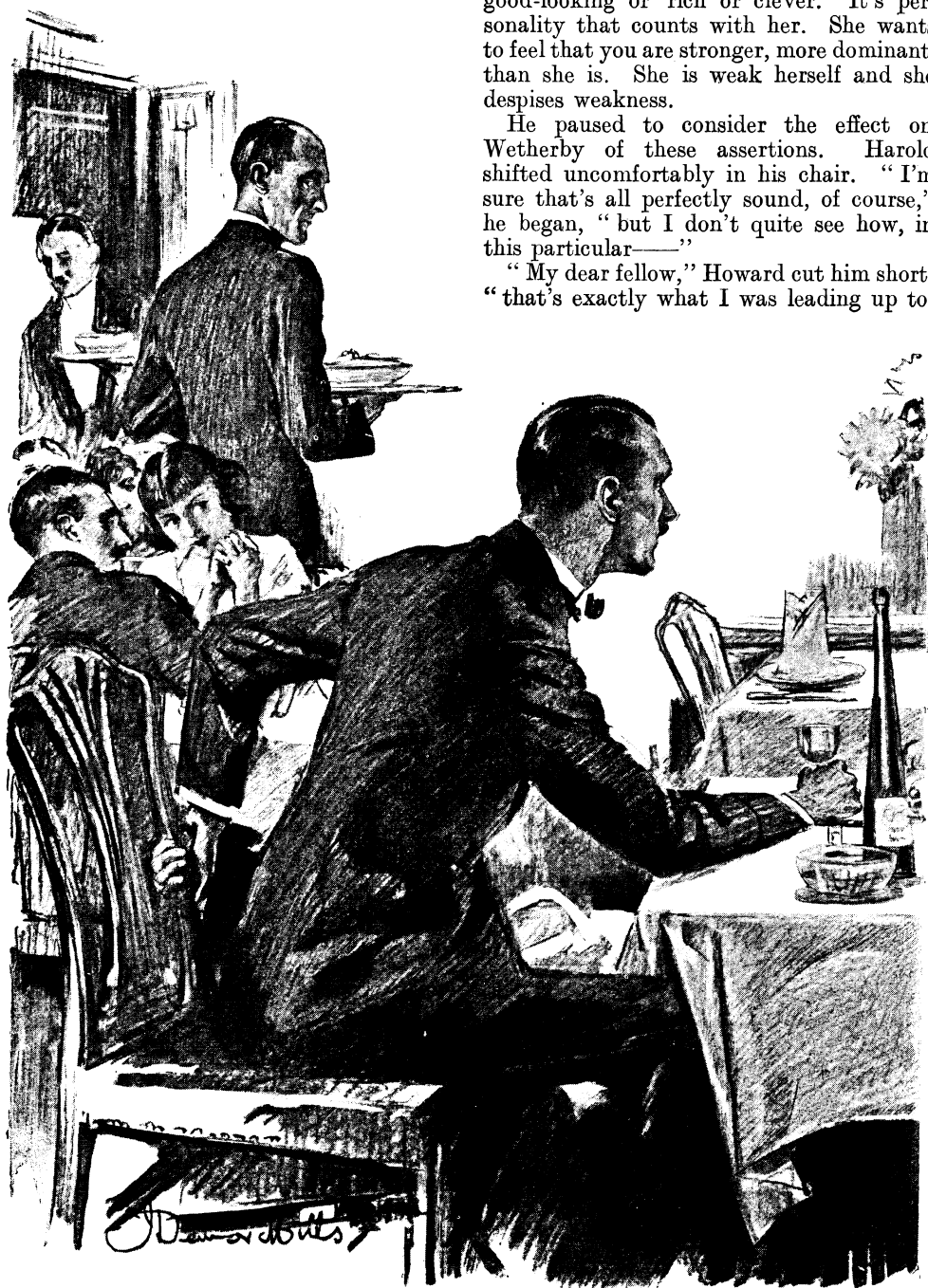
He nodded and hummed and said "Ah, yes!" at appropriate intervals, and, when his companion had finished, leant back in his chair, the tips of his fingers pressed

together below his chin. "M'yes," he said. "I think I can diagnose your case. Quite a simple one. The sort of thing that's always likely to happen—shall we say?—to people such as ourselves, of taste and

breeding. We are a highly civilised product, and we forget that at heart a woman is still a rather—well, shall we say primitive creature? She's nearer to Nature than we are. She doesn't care whether a man's good-looking or rich or clever. It's personality that counts with her. She wants to feel that you are stronger, more dominant, than she is. She is weak herself and she despises weakness.

He paused to consider the effect on Wetherby of these assertions. Harold shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "I'm sure that's all perfectly sound, of course," he began, "but I don't quite see how, in this particular——"

"My dear fellow," Howard cut him short, "that's exactly what I was leading up to.



"He cut short her introduction. 'I'm not interested,'

You've got to manage her. You've got to show her you're her master."

"But I'm not."

"Then you must pretend you are. Assert your independence."

Harold drew his fingers unhappily through the dark masses of his hair.

"But you don't know Gladys," he

said. "She's not that sort. She wouldn't stand it."

Howard laughed. "My dear fellow, that's what one always thinks, but they like it, at heart, and if it's the right man. They're so much nearer to Nature than we are. Two thousand years ago they were running wild in forests; men hunted them, and fought for them, and took them, and they haven't altered. Look at



he said, 'in this gentleman's identity.'

the plays and the books and the cinemas that really appeal to them. The strong man every time."

Harold ruminated. "It's all very well," he said at last, "but I don't believe that sort of thing's my game."

"Then you must make it your game. Act the part, if you don't feel it. Go and be a cave-man, and good luck to you."

#### IV.

THREE days later Gladys was dining alone in the gallery at Romano's with her brother's great friend, Captain Stewart Harrison. He had just returned on leave from India, and had rung her up immediately on his arrival. She had promised to dance that night with Harold, but it was so long since she had had any direct news of her brother, and Captain Harrison was staying in London only for one night, on his way through to Devonshire, and one could, after all, dance at Ciro's any night. She had therefore accepted his invitation to dine, and had rung up Harold to postpone their party. He had not been at the office, was not at his club, and as he had not yet returned to his flat, she had left a message there, asking him to excuse her for that evening and suggesting any other night in that or the following week.

It was with a genuine relief that she found herself, after the tension of the past week, in the company of a man towards whom her feelings were of simple, perhaps of casual, friendliness, but with whom she shared many interests and associations. It was a relief to enjoy unreservedly good cooking and good wine; a relief not to have to be thinking all the time "I mustn't say this, I must avoid friction"; a relief to be able to talk freely, with the conversation flavoured ever so slightly by the sense of masculine society.

Stewart was rather a dear, she felt, as she leant back contented in her chair and sipped a sweet sugary liqueur; a stupid, unimaginative sort of dear, perhaps; the sort of dear, though, that would make a woman very happy.

"Easy to manage," she thought, "in spite of his being a soldier."

She smiled at him, a soft, womanly, caressing smile. "It's good to see you again, Stewart," she said.

"And since I've been away, you've got engaged, they tell me."

She nodded.

"And you'll be married soon."

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't

know, Stewart. I don't know at all; it's all—all rather difficult."

He leant forward, his elbow resting on the table, and as he did so he saw below, in the main body of the restaurant, a man glaring up at him. His eyes met the glare; he frowned, but the glare continued.

"Gladys," he said, "I don't know what it is, but there's a man below staring at us in a most curious manner."

She turned, looked over the edge of the alcove, and gave a gasp. "Why—oh, but how funny!" she said. "That's Harold. I'll wave to him."

But already Harold had risen from his seat. For ten minutes he had been trying to collect sufficient courage. He had at last succeeded, and in long, shambling strides he hurried towards the end of the room, towards the staircase.

The receipt of Gladys's message had at the same time annoyed, disappointed, and relieved him. For obvious reasons annoyed and disappointed, and relieved because, under the influence of Howard's rhetoric, he had been laboriously concocting a campaign of cave-manship that he had intended that evening to put in practice, an uncongenial task of which he was not sorry to be rid. "Ah, well," he had said, "I'll have a quiet dinner by myself, and perhaps I may think of something." And he had chosen a restaurant and a table where he could observe undisturbed an animated flow of life.

The first thing that he had observed was Gladys dining alone and intimately with a man whom he had never seen. "So that is why she could not dance with me." His first thought was of acute and blinding misery. "It's over," he told himself. "I've lost her. It was too good to be true. She's in love with someone else." Then: "But not without a struggle; I won't let her go without a fight." And suddenly he saw that he had been presented with an unique opportunity for a display of the cave-man nature in him that would win him her love for ever. What was it Howard had said? "Two thousand years ago she was running wild in the forests. Men fought for her and took her." Two thousand years ago he would have walked up and clubbed that young fool on the head, seized Gladys by the hair, and dragged her away to some damp hutment in the hills.

One couldn't, of course, do that sort of thing in the twentieth century, but there were equivalents. At that moment he

realised that he was being stared at. It settled him. It amounted to a challenge. He made for the stairs.

As he walked down the balcony towards their alcove, a blind panic seized him. "What on earth was he to do now?" Gladys had risen, smiling, from her seat.

"But how nice!" she was saying. "This is Captain Stewart Harrison."

Then something seemed to click in his brain, and he knew exactly what he had to do. Out of a confused remembrance of plays and books and pictures, his part took shape before him. He felt like an actor who has momentarily lost his cue and then remembered it. He knew his lines. He would enjoy himself. It was quite simple.

With a peremptory gesture he cut short her introduction. "I am not interested," he said, "in this gentleman's identity. You promised to spend the evening with me. At the last moment you say you cannot. I find you dining with another man. That is quite enough."

"But..." Across her face passed a look of outraged astonishment, and she raised her hand towards her forehead.

"We will not discuss it," he said. "You will come straight back home with me. Waiter, bring me madam's bill at once, separately."

"But..." Captain Harrison had risen to his feet and was fingering his moustache nervously. What an amazing situation! And what, in Heaven's name, was a fellow to think of it? He supposed that he ought to do something. But in a public restaurant! After all, she was engaged to the chap. Really, though—He began to hum and haw, but Gladys stopped him. "Please, please!" she said. Already people had begun to stop eating and had turned to look at them. The couple at the next table were whispering together, and three men dining in the hall below were staring hard up at them.

She stood still while Harold settled the account, and tipped the waiter, and allowed him to take her by the arm and lead her to the staircase. A buzz of whispering seemed to follow them. At the head of the staircase the head waiter came up and began to whisper to Harold.

"What—what is it?" he said. "My own bill for downstairs? Oh, yes, right—here you are."

At last they were in the Strand and inside a taxi. There was a dead silence. Neither knew what to say. He had hardly con-

sidered what one did when the cave-man stunt was over. He had been led by the literature dealing with the subject to believe that the girl on such occasions turns towards the man, submissive, timid, her eyes dilated and very tender. "You wonderful man!" she says, "Oh, how I love you!" and they fall into each other's arms.

Gladys, however, did nothing of the sort. She sat still and silent and unresponsive in the corner of the taxi. A numbing fear crept over him. What on earth had he done? Had he spoilt things utterly for ever?

She did not say a word till the car drew up before her door. Then quite calmly: "You'd better come in. Mother's out. There'll be a fire in the drawing-room. We can talk there."

Wretched beyond speech, he followed her.

They sat on either side of the fireplace. He said nothing. There was nothing for him to say. He was overwhelmed with the sense of a supreme, irremediable mistake. At last she spoke.

"I don't understand, Harold. I don't begin to understand. It was so unlike you. It was terrible. I have never been more ashamed of myself in my life. But that's over now. And—oh, well, it's not that only. I'm—I'm sorry, Harold. It's no good. I've been feeling it for some time past now. We've made a mistake. We'll only make each other unhappy. We'd—we'd far better forget all about it, and not see each other again, perhaps, not till—" And with a quick movement she pulled off her engagement ring and handed it across to him.

He took it, let it rest in the palm of his hand, and sat staring at it stupidly. So it was over. He had lost her, the one woman he had ever loved—that one woman of whom poets wrote—and he had lost her for ever.

"I'm sorry, Gladys," he said. "I—I—I don't know why I did it. It was horrible. I— Oh, you wouldn't understand! But things were going wrong, and I felt—I don't know—one reads about it in books and things—the strong man, and... Oh, Gladys, Gladys, and I've lost you!"

But he could not go on. His voice broke, and for the first time for over twenty years he burst into a violent fit of crying. He sank his head forward on his hands, his shoulders shaking with great, heavy sobs. "And I did—I did so love you!"

And as she sat there watching him, suddenly, unaccountably it seemed to her



that he had found miraculously that key to her secret chamber: that he had done at last the thing which she had known instinctively he had in him to do, the thing that would make her for all time his. All that was strong in her and purposeful and reliant was moved towards this weakness, this clinging weakness that cried to her to be sustained, supported, reassured.

She sank down on her knees before him.

Her arms were about his neck. "Don't cry," she said. "Don't cry, my precious, my dear one—it will be all right. Forget all about to-night. We'll begin again—right at the beginning. And we'll love each other so much, and be so happy. Oh, my dear, my darling!"

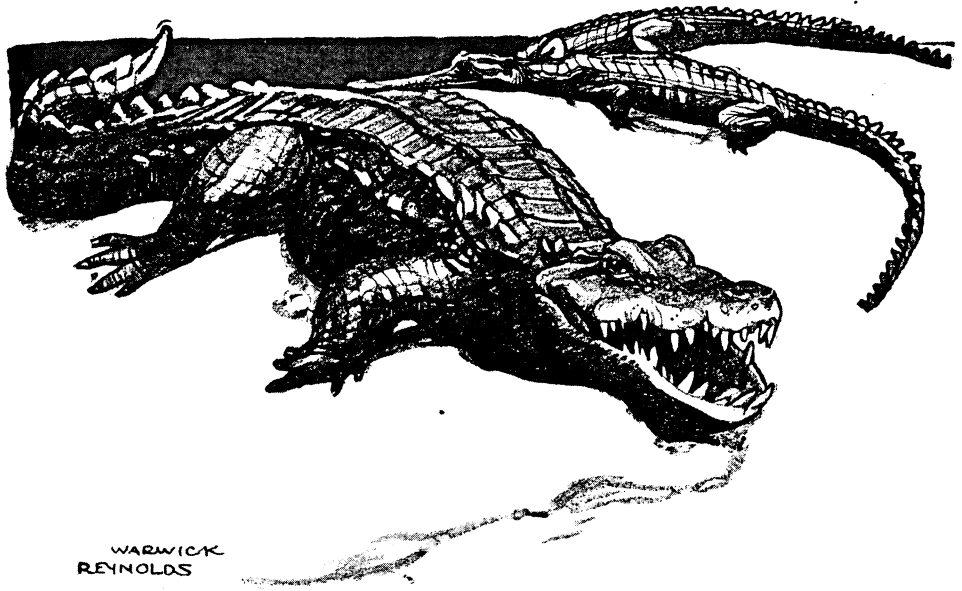
She turned his face to hers, and their lips met in the first real kiss of either of their lives.



## THE WIND AND THE CITY.

**T**HE wind has come to the city and still to its pinions cling  
 The flavours of heath and holt, of furrow, pasture and ling;  
 The breath of the kine is in it, the keen, sad tang of the soil,  
 And the song of the mounting lark above the pastoral toil.  
 So it comes to the city, and sweeps over lintel and coign and sill,  
 But wakes in the passionless stone no response, no wonder, no thrill;  
 And the people it meets in its passage hear nothing of all it saith  
 Of the primitive murmurs of trees and the word of the primal Breath:  
 But they go their ways unheeding the forces of Time and Space,  
 Nor against the immutable vastness behold their mutable place.  
 Yet ever where life the perturbable flows with its swiftest tide,  
 There the imperturbable forces most surely and deeply abide,  
 And what in his season and sphere is that shadow of shadow, Man,  
 But a breath in the wind that sweeps from the wind of the Breath that began?

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.



"The monster drew slowly out on to the sand and lay on the river-brink in the blazing sun, revealed in all its hideousness."

# THE WARDEN OF THE FORD

By LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY, F.R.G.S.

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

THE Indian countryside drowed in the hot noontide sun. All Nature seemed asleep. In the hedgeless black fields neither man nor animal moved. Not a bird was to be seen, save the one vulture poised on planing wing and soaring so high in air as to be only a speck in the sky. There was no movement, except where the waters of the River Jumna, shimmering in the heat haze, slipped down to join the thrice-holy stream of the Ganges at the city of Allahabad a few miles on. Sluggishly the current slid between two broad stretches of sand glaringly white that ran unbroken to the distant banks of the shrunken river—banks that stood up like gaunt and desolate cliffs two miles apart, banks that only knew the kiss of the lapping water in the few months of the rainy season, when a brown and turbulent torrent surged

in flood between them and filled the broad bed.

For the rest of the year the diminished stream, scarcely a couple of hundred yards wide, was hemmed in by the shining wastes of sand that, white as snow, dry as the dunes of the Sahara, lay baking in the sun. When a hot wind blew, little dust-devils rose in spirals and danced over them—the only thing in Nature stirring. Except near the water's edge. For there swarms of living creatures moved, crawling and wriggling incessantly over the sand. Quaint little beings they were, like lizards in appearance, except that their snouts were so long as to form nearly a third of the total length of the small reptiles, which generally measured about twelve or eighteen inches. These snouts were narrow, and the jaws were studded with needle-like teeth. In

scores, in hundreds, they climbed over each other and clawed their way aimlessly about on the hot sand, seeming to avoid the shining water as though it meant death to them. Yet out from it there crawled into the sunshine on land a formidable creature eight or ten feet long that resembled them in all but size and showed what these small beasties would grow into. Its narrow head tapered into the same projecting snout two feet or more in length, but not four inches broad, hard, bony, and furnished with sharp, cruel teeth irregularly gapped and studding the jaws to the widened-out end of the snout. Its skull and its back and the long tail were protected by a thick, horny plating, but the skin of the throat and belly was softer and supple. The claws ending the short legs by which it had slowly and with difficulty dragged itself out of the water were formidable, and altogether it was a terrifying creature to look at. The bravest man might well shudder at the thought of entering water that held such fearsome monsters.

Yet it was a harmless beast enough, a *ghavial* or fish-eating crocodile, and its terrible jaws and rows of ferocious teeth held no menace to man or animal. It lay basking peacefully in the sun, paying no attention to the swarming infants of its kind so newly hatched out in the burning sand that they had never yet entered the water which was to be their future sphere in life.

Soon instinct would draw them to it, and with no prompting of the mothers that they had never seen they would quit the solid land to plunge into the cool depths and sink to the mud and stones on the bottom, where a faint, wavering light replaced the hot sunshine that had brought them into existence. But they would come back every day to bask in its warmth again. For crocodiles and alligators of every kind the world over love to lie motionless for hours basking in the sun, as though its rays could penetrate their iron hides or warm their cold blood.

As the afternoon shadows lengthened, the villages on the distant banks awoke to life when the breathless noonday heat had passed. From the thatched mud huts women emerged, women with slim, graceful figures and shining black hair covered by the red *saris* draped shawl-fashion over their heads, on which they balanced brass vessels. Chattering gaily they walked with upright carriage on bare feet to the wells to fetch the water for the evening meal.

By winding paths down the steep banks on to the yielding sand came herds of cattle driven by yelling brown-skinned boys to drink from the river. From two villages facing each other on either bank lines of bare-legged men with heavy burdens on their turbaned heads shuffled down on to beaten tracks over the sandy waste and, with the white dust rising from under their shoes and sandals, hurried to a ford and, thigh-deep, waded across it. As they passed each other on the way to the far side they exchanged greetings.

The crocodiles big and small had all disappeared. The last of the babies to plunge into the unknown element had been scared in by groups of girls who had come down from the huts above for their evening bathe. With thin cotton garments clinging to their rounded forms the laughing brown maidens, waist-deep in the river, splashed the cooling water over themselves and each other. Then, standing with naked little feet on the warm sand, they modestly slipped from their wet robes into dry ones and climbed up again to the villages hidden in the trees on the banks. As the sun sank lower, like grains of dust blown against the rose-red sky came flights of birds to drink their eventide draught. Solitary by the water's edge a long-legged fowl stalked, crying out querulously as he went a plaintive cry that sounded like "Did he do it? Did he—did he do it?"

And night fell, as it has fallen through the ages, on the unanswered question that his race has always asked; and darkness settled on the peaceful river, which slipped sighing by its sandy borders to its tryst with the holier but deadlier Ganges.

For that sacred stream, which, the pious Hindu believes, brings salvation in the next world, often brings death in this, to the people of the land through which it flows. The Hindu believes that its waters will purify his soul if his dead body be given them to bear to the sea. And so in the temple-crowned city of Benares its banks are thronged with the litters of dying men begging that when their last breath is drawn the lamenting relatives should push their corpses into the holy river to float away towards the far-distant Bay of Bengal.

But they will never reach it. For the Ganges hides in her depths deadlier monsters than her sister Jumna. Crocodiles of quite another sort—*mugger*, they are called—blunt-nosed, big-toothed brutes that feed

on corpses—aye, and will not wait for the dead if they can seize the living bodies of men and animals. There are big turtles, too, that will attack a bather even close to shore and will escort the drifting dead Hindus and sate their hunger as they float downstream.

These turtles are found in the Jumna, too, but not to the same extent. But the *mugger* is almost unknown in it, at least near Allahabad, and leaves the harmless *ghavial* to flourish unrivalled. So bathing human and drinking cattle enter its water without apprehension. And over this ford between the villages the peasants waded to and fro every day. Women and children dipped their heated bodies fearlessly into the cool river; and at eventide the herds followed the call of their leaders' tinkling bells and, standing hock-deep, plunged their muzzles into the lapping stream.

\* \* \* \* \*

One windless day at noon, when only the baby crocodiles were there to see, three ripples broke the glassy surface near the ford—ripples that, strange to say, moved on up against the sluggish current. And if any little *ghavial* had had enough curiosity to watch closely, it would have noticed that the ripples were caused by three black points just awash and seeming to swim upstream. Soon they changed their course and headed across the river for the sand on one side. And as they neared it they grew larger and rose higher, and behind them a line of black spots gradually lifted above the surface until there appeared what seemed to be a floating rough-barked tree-trunk. In shallow water it stranded. But still it moved on towards the shore and soon a broad and hideous head, the bony prominences over eyes and nose of which had caused the ripples, rose out of the river.

It was hard to realise that it *was* the head of a living creature and not a gnarled, knot-studded block of dark driftwood. It was nearly three feet long and almost as wide, with deep-sunk, wicked little eyes, a broad, blunt snout and a great mouth from which immense yellow fangs protruded. It seemed roughly hacked out of nobbly stone or metal, and the bulky, clumsy body that, dragged by short, stunted legs with claws tipped with thick spikes, followed it out of the water, looked as if covered with plates of roughened armour.

The monster drew slowly out on to the sand and lay on the river-brink in the blazing sun, revealed in all its hideousness—

an old *mugger* or man-eating crocodile. It resembled the crocodiles of African rivers and the alligators of the New World, but differed greatly from the slenderer *ghavials*. It was about thirteen feet long and bulky out of all proportion to its length.

Motionless, lifeless, it reposed in the sunshine, to all appearance a harmless block of wood. But a little later two six or eight-foot fish-eaters crawled awkwardly out of the river on to the sand at that spot and saw it. Such a monster had never come into their ken. They did not like its looks and, not waiting to ascertain what it was, they slipped gently back into the water again and left it in undisputed possession of that stretch of shore. And various others of their kind that came later did the same.

No *mugger*, in their memory or in the memory of man, had ever been seen there. Indeed, his presence was a mystery. What induced the hoary old monster to quit his native river, in which he had dwelt for very many years, and adventure in strange waters is impossible to tell. It may be that he had been driven from his usual haunts by younger rivals. It certainly must have been some powerful motive that sent him roaming in his old age.

For that he was very ancient indeed admitted of no doubt. His armoured hide was almost ossified. His thick claw-tips were worn and blunted, as were the great yellow fangs, and his size, small compared with African crocodiles, was unusual in these Indian rivers. He seemed to be stiff and feeble, and apparently it was with great difficulty that he dragged his unwieldy bulk on to land. But in the river he was astonishingly swift and agile. And even on shore he showed how quickly he could move when, as he lay at the water's edge and a boat came upstream with splashing oars, with only a dexterous touch of a claw he shoved himself instantly into the river and disappeared swiftly, yet so quietly that scarcely a ripple showed on the surface.

After the midday siesta the villages awoke to life again. The *ghavials* large and small disappeared when across the sands came the lines of cattle, and the white expanse was speckled with dots of red and brown from the coloured garments of the women wending their way to the river bank for the evening bathe.

A group of little girls knee-deep in the stream laughingly refused to follow farther an older companion who had waded in almost to her neck. The falling drops of



"There was a sudden swirling rush through the muddied water, a high-pitched shriek of agony, and one of the waders was dragged out of the sight of the staring eyes of his comrades."

of the sun, and so engrossed were they in their play that none noticed a faint ripple breaking the glassy surface and moving swiftly towards them. The elder child was reproaching the others for their cowardice, when suddenly, with a shriek of terror of awful agony, she flung up her arms and disappeared from their sight.

They laughed merrily, thinking it was done in play; but when she did not come up again, they grew frightened and called to women bathing close by.

One of these waded out and groped under water, but failed to find the missing girl. Others came to help her, but were equally unsuccessful, and, concluding that the child had been seized with cramp and drowned, they gave up the search and returned to the village to break the sad news to her parents.

WARWICK  
REYNOLDS

water with which she splashed them sparkled like diamonds in the slanting rays



“*Shaitan! Shaitan!*” they cried.”

And on the slimy stones at the bottom in the deepest part of the river the little body lay, held down by the weight of her slayer.

A day or two later a woman bathing disappeared in like manner, snatched from the midst of a group of companions in the water. And then another and another tragedy occurred along the river-brim, and the mystery deepened. Yet every day, during the hottest hours, the crocodile crawled ashore to lie in the sun a couple of miles below the villages. But none of their inhabitants ever visited that part of the sands, and the occasional boatmen who saw him in passing never tarried to gossip as they made their way down stream to Allahabad or toiled at their oars back again.

But at last he was seen by scores one day when, growing bolder, he swam in to shallow

water and, seizing a woman by the leg, dragged her away.

After that the deadly sands were shunned by bathers and others who went to wash clothes, and in vain the hungry crocodile haunted their margin every afternoon.

But still the droves of cattle came down at sunset to drink, and all meat was welcome to the lurking monster. So one afternoon when a herd-leader, with bell dangling at her throat, splashed into the river, a ripple, a swirl in the water, a terrifying scream like the blood-curdling cry of a wounded horse, and

the struggling cow was dragged bodily out into the stream and down into the slimy depths. There she was held until she died of drowning, for thus do crocodiles kill their victims. Her carcase was left on the bottom to decompose, for a *mugger* likes his game high.

The disappearance of the cow made more stir and caused more distress and resentment among the villagers on either bank than had the loss of the women. For to the Hindu the cow is a very sacred animal—so his religion teaches him. The killing of one is an enormity that, if perpetrated by a Mahommedan in an Indian town—this happens often in religious riots—means the swift death of many men, if British soldiers are not swiftly at hand to keep warring rival sects apart. It is not difficult to understand why kine are thus revered by a pastoral and agricultural race, and why Hindus worship the gentle animal that gives them milk and butter, which suffice for most of their simple needs.

On the other hand women are plentiful and not rated high among a people where a father values only sons and regrets the birth of a daughter, who will cost him good money for her dowry when the day comes to marry her off.

The cattle were now no longer allowed to drink in the river. So another source of supply was cut off from the hungry *mugger*, and he had to go groping with gaping jaws among the stones at the bottom of the Jumna to catch freshwater crabs, a pitiful diet with which to fill so large a stomach.

Hitherto he had not ventured to interfere with the daily traffic across the ford, because those using it generally went in company, and even a solitary individual splashed noisily as he waded through the water. And crocodiles are easily frightened.

But hunger makes even man-eating tigers desperate at times, and they are cowardly brutes enough. And at last the day came when, as the lines of crossing men were making their way over the river one afternoon, there was a sudden swirling rush through the muddied water, a high-pitched shriek of agony, and one of the waders was dragged out of the sight of the staring eyes of his comrades.

"*Shaitan! Shaitan!*" (A devil!), they cried and, dropping their burdens, splashed frantically towards the sand.

When they reached dry land they ran for their lives, and those who found themselves on the wrong side of the river made a long

journey on foot to find a boat to convey them back again.

For a few days no one ventured to use the ford. But it was so necessary to the villagers, that at last a regular expedition was organised on either bank, from which simultaneously large bands of men attempted the passage perilous, shouting and beating tom-toms, while shaven-crowned priests from the temples blessed the undertaking and solemnly cursed the crocodile.

And a few hundred yards downstream, with nose and eyes just awash, the *mugger* floated and watched the noisy processions, but made no effort to interfere with them. In view of the demonstration he decided on a shellfish diet that day.

But such an imposing assembly could not be collected together every time that the ford was to be used. The local residents, indeed, were careful to cross it in bands; but stray wayfarers who came by the roads that ended and began at the villages, knew nothing of the grim warden who guarded it now and waded in with the courage of ignorance. Few of them received any warning, for the Oriental is as averse as the proverbial Englishman to interfering in the concerns of another person with whom he is not acquainted. So the inhabitants of the locality did not often trouble to warn strangers of the lurking danger, and the warden took his toll.

Sometimes, however, he would give no sign of life for weeks. Then the villagers, with the rash carelessness of the East that is not unknown in the West, would conclude that he had gone away for good, and would venture singly or in twos and threes across the fatal ford. But none repeated the experiment often, for sooner or later—generally sooner—they paid for their foolish confidence with their lives.

He was at other times frequently seen floating half-submerged and expectant, or in the hot hours of noon quietly moving to the sand and crawling slowly and heavily out of the water, to lie just clear of it, ready, at the approach of a boat on the stream or of a man on the shore, to slip swiftly back into the river and sink out of sight.

He was now beginning to realise that for some unknown reason there were those who did not wish him well. Naturally it did not enter his thick head that these easily-caught human creatures whom, obeying the instincts implanted in him, he seized as his prey, could possibly object or their fellows resent his actions. And so he was



surprised and somewhat indignant when passing boats, which he regarded as strange and formidable beings and never interfered with, began to assail him. For sometimes they came straight towards him and disturbed his noonday siesta, and from them shots were fired at him. It took a few such experiences before he associated a violent blow on the impenetrable armour of his back, or a sudden spurting up of sand near him as he dived into the river, with their presence or the sharp, strange sound coming from them that, being inexplicable, was to be feared. He did not know that these happenings meant that white men from Allahabad had heard of him and sought his life, without realising that the iron hide and the thick skull were proof to rifle bullets.

But he took to disappearing into the water at the first sight of a boat whenever he was indulging in a happy, idle hour on the warm sand before hunger drove him into the cold depths to search for crabs, and fill his belly with unwanted stones at the same time in trying to scoop them up with his great jaws on a pebbly bottom. It was mostly shell-fish for him now, for the toll that the ford paid the grisly warden grew less with the passing days as his evil fame spread far, and few travellers reached it without hearing of him. The villagers at last gave up using it at all and walked many miles to a ferry. So that it was seldom that he could make a satisfying meal on an incautious human.

He caught fish when he could, but here he was at a disadvantage compared with his *ghavial* cousins with their long, rat-trap jaws and the torpedo-shaped bodies that could move through the water so much more quickly than his clumsier carcase.

He was not popular among these distant relatives of his, although, without realising it, they owed him a debt of gratitude for the tranquillity of the sands now never trodden by human foot, owing to the terror of his name. They had to thank him for being allowed to bask in the sun as long as they liked. But they distrusted him and gave him a wide berth. No male *ghavial*

took his sun-bath or female one crawled ashore to lay her eggs in the stretch of sand on which he was accustomed to take his daily airing. I do not wish to libel him, but I would not have trusted him with a clutch of the white leathery eggs or a batch of the wriggling, long-snouted babies.

Some of the *ghavial* far exceeded him in length, though not in bulk, for occasionally in the Jumna they are eighteen feet from nose to tip of tail. And such brutes, with their immensely long jaws studded with cruel teeth, looked, but were not, more formidable creatures than the grim warden, who might easily have been mistaken for a drifting tree-trunk as he floated along on the surface or lay at the water's edge.

Indeed, more than one seeker for his hide did so mistake him until the apparent log slid quickly into the water before the inexpert hunter could raise his rifle. And more skilled ones were baffled by his seeing their boats first and disappearing promptly.

But one day there came a young soldier who had learned by their errors. In the bows of a native craft drifting slowly with the current he lay, scanning the banks with field-glasses, and spotted his quarry before the warden saw him. He landed at once on the opposite shore and crawled like a snake over the blistering sand until, from cover within range, he had a clear view of the sleeping monster through his glasses and could select the exact spot in which to plant his shot—the soft skin at the side of the neck.

I think the warden never knew what hurt him. The expanding bullet smashed his spine and paralysed him so that he was unable to give that little shove with the claw that sends most even badly-wounded crocodiles into the water to die at the bottom and so disappoint the seekers after their hides.

But when the slayer stood over the immense carcase the crocodile clashed his enormous jaws together once or twice to intimate what he would do if he could. And then he died.

The ford was toll-free once more.







"Promise me you won't shout if I take the gag away."

# THE REVOLT OF RIVETTE

By ROBERTSON CARFRAE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

THE revolt of Walter Rivette began, oddly enough, at the precise moment when the cook-boy, a half-naked Swahili with a squint and a saturnine trick of silence, thrust into his hand the summons from Manoel Carto.

It may have been the heat, for Lindi is a warmish spot just before the rains; it may have been the ugliness of the cook, of whom

Rivette was secretly afraid; it may have been that the note lacked the fine shade of politeness that he thought was due as between an owner and his skipper, or it may have been a combination of all three. In any case, from that moment the slumbering fire of resentment glowed to a brisk flame in Rivette's none too strong mind.

"I want you at once in Edri's Café. Keep quiet about it and hurry.—Manoel Carto."

That was the note. Rivette had no intention of neglecting the appointment; such a thing as disobedience never entered his head. None the less, he swung himself over the schooner's side into the dinghy with a surge of black rage in his veins.

The *Santa Lucia* was but an indistinct smudge in the darkness as he clambered to the wharf and made fast the dinghy. The streets of Lindi were shrouded in thick darkness. Where Edri's Café stood he had no precise idea.

Rivette slumped along in his worn canvas shoes, shivering with apprehension when his foot slipped into a hole in the sandy road. The silence and an eerie feeling of being watched strummed on his jangled nerves like a groping hand on a violin.

Suddenly the shrouded figure of a native loomed before him. Rivette shot out a question. "*Sijui!*" grunted the man impassively, and passed on into the shadows. Rivette hitched his coat closer about his shoulders and growled a smothered curse on Manoel Carto and all his works.

As if in deliberate freakishness, a whirring insect brushed against his face and cut short the stream of abuse. Rivette stopped short in his tracks; the climate of East Africa had sapped his resistance to sudden shocks. The combination of fever, risks, and the domination of a single man had reduced him to the stage when the soft swoop of a bat or the stirring of a goat under the eaves of a native hut could sting him like an electric current.

A dim shaft of light pierced the blackness as he rounded a corner. Rivette slid alongside the verandah soundlessly and searched for a sign. "Café-Restaurant Edri," he read in smudged letters. The house was squat, almost sinister in its vague lack of outline, huddling back from the roadway like a furtive animal in a tangle of shrubs. Clearly no great shakes of a place, thought Rivette.

He stood in the doorway, a thin figure in dungaree trousers and flannel shirt, scanning the place to find Manoel Carto. Three oil lamps hung from the ceiling, each smoking slightly. The whitewashed walls were grubby with age, dented by the hard backs of chairs and soiled with countless finger-marks. Across the corner stood a counter with two stands of dusty sugar-coated cakes and a kaleidoscopic row of syrup bottles.

A black boy slept behind it, breathing heavily through his parted lips.

"A fine place!" thought Rivette bitterly. "The old games, I suppose!" He coughed in a smothered fashion as the reek of the lamps caught his throat.

At the sound a chair creaked in the shadow of the counter. A voice called "Come in, Rivette!" and a white hand flickered in the light, beckoning.

Rivette threaded his way through the groups of tables; the black boy woke at the flapping sound of his shoes. In the dimness Manoel Carto heaved himself erect in his chair.

"I got your message," said Rivette. "What do you want?"

"I want you on business—a small matter. Sit down opposite me, where I can see you."

Rivette took the indicated chair and sat facing the owner of the *Santa Lucia*. Carto, with his huge drooping shoulders and his chin almost resting on the bosom of his shirt, looked inhumanly powerful. More like an ape than ever, thought Rivette. His hands, stretched along the arms of his chair, ended in unnaturally long fingers, the nails curved like claws and the thumbs too short and too straight. In these hands lay the secret of Manoel Carto's unlovely reputation, perhaps, speculated the skipper.

"What business?" he asked quickly. "I tell you the skipper of a boat deserves better treatment than this. I've tramped half an hour looking for this hole."

"Business comes before dignity—at least, your dignity," said Carto in the high voice which accorded so ill with his bulk. "Listen to me. We are going to have a guest on the *Lucia*—perhaps an unwilling guest. That is where your help would be needed."

Rivette opened his lips doubtfully, as if to protest. Carto waved a command for silence.

"No objections, please! Presently you will see a man come into this *café*. Like you, he comes by appointment. He is to be persuaded aboard the *Santa Lucia*, for it suits me so. I have men to do the work; all you have to do is to save us from interference by people we may meet. I suggest you do this by pretending to be a drunken sailor. Our friend who is being carried will be thought your companion—rather more intoxicated than yourself. We must get aboard in peace and without recognition. You understand?"

"What is it?" asked Rivette weakly. "A kidnapping scheme?"

"Nothing of the kind. This man has some goods to sell, and I prefer to do the business on my own ship. He will not agree, so we must persuade him."

"Look here," interrupted the sailor nervously, "if it is crooked, I refuse to touch it. You don't get me into any such scheme."

"My dear man," said Carto soothingly, "there is really no need for this kind of talk. There is nothing dishonest in it. If there were"—he spoke with cruel deliberation—"I should find someone of greater pluck. Are you the man for anything dangerous? Ho-ho!"

He laughed suddenly, a quick, gasping laugh that twisted his lips and left his eyes steely and mirthless. Rivette, in a passion of loathing, did not attempt to answer.

"And, besides"—the laugh ceased suddenly—"it is disrespectful to talk to your owner about honesty. Understand me, Rivette, if you interfere with me, you will suffer for it. That is not a threat, mark you; it is a simple prophecy."

"But you don't think—" protested the skipper peevishly. He broke off his speech as the native bar-tender leant across the counter and whispered to Carto.

"Quiet!" ordered the owner. "Salim here says he hears this man coming. Now, remember, you divert attention from us, even if you start a brawl to do it."

Words died away on the skipper's lips. The star-studded patch of sky in the doorway had been blotted out by the bulk of a man, big and broad-shouldered, who had to stoop to enter. Once again Manoel Carto's white hand flickered in the light. "Here we are!" he invited in his smooth voice. Rivette, disturbed and conscious of his inability to cope with the situation, lay back in his chair and resolved to watch.

"I got your letter, Carto," said the stranger without preamble. "I gather you can offer me a good price for my rubies. They are uncut, you know."

"Yes, I know that. I am sorry you had to come here. We leave to-morrow morning and there was no time to arrange anything better," fluted Carto, twining his long fingers. "Will you have coffee, Mr. Edwards?"

"No, thanks," said Edwards. He pulled out his pipe and began to fill it. "What was your offer exactly?"

Rivette glanced from one to the other. Manoel Carto held his coffee spoon in the fingers of his left hand; his face was devoid of expression. A cool customer, thought the skipper with an unwilling admiration.

He became aware that several shadows had appeared in the room—six or seven tall natives, hidden from Edwards' sight. He was astonished to see four of his crew amongst them, broad-shouldered savages, naked but for their loin-cloths.

Edwards was still absorbed in stuffing the bowl of his pipe. The skipper of the *Santa Lucia* longed to warn him, but a fleeting glance at Carto deterred him. After all, he thought, the fellow had refused coffee, which would doubtless have given him an easy trip to the schooner. Even if he spoke, the warning might come too late. He sat, detached from the events, slowly considering the advisability of intervention.

While he waited, Carto repeated the invitation; Edwards, lighting his pipe, shook his head. Carto dropped the spoon into the saucer with a sudden twitch of his fingers. The natives sprang forward; Edwards turned his head in startled apprehension, only to receive a heavy blow from the leader. They encircled him with their naked arms; a gag was thrust between his teeth, choking off his yell of anger. Almost without a sound he was overcome and bound. From the floor he gazed dumbly at his captor, a light of fury in his grey eyes.

"Now you will come aboard the *Santa Lucia*, my friend," said Carto smilingly. "We will have our little talk there. For a man of your brains, you have singularly little of the instinct of self-preservation. Or perhaps it is dormant? You will need it, you know!"

He nodded to the natives, and Edwards was hoisted from the floor to the shoulders of four men. Rivette admired the neatness with which it had been done. Carto had a head for organisation.

The moonless sky was becoming overcast. Soundlessly, except for an occasional grunt from a bearer, they made their way to the harbour. No one stopped them; no one passed. If anyone saw the procession from the darkened verandah of a house, he deemed it wise to refrain from comment.

## II.

WALTER RIVETTE leant on the rail of the *Santa Lucia*, listening to the plop of the little waves that broke against her side. The clouds were flushed with the first blood-red rays of the dawn, and the water beneath the ship's shadowed forefoot gleamed like black basalt. A Swahili boy swabbed the decks, his feet swishing through the water. Rivette heard no other sign of life.

Half hypnotised by the water, he smoked slowly, vaguely resentful of the fact that he had been drawn into another of Carto's vile schemes, vaguely curious as to the outcome. He hated the domination of Manoel Carto with the fretting hatred of a performing animal, but he could see no way out of the impasse. What made it worse was Carto's undisguised contempt for him.

He tapped out his pipe, thrust the stem of it into his belt, and lounged below to breakfast. He wondered how that fellow Edwards was enjoying himself, trussed like a fowl in a narrow bunk. It was no concern of his, he thought, but, all the same, he would have it out with Carto. His position was intolerable.

As the imperturbable Goanese steward brought him a slice of ham, he announced that his master had already breakfasted, and was talking with the gentleman who had come aboard last night. Rivette smiled sourly. "Come aboard!" That was a good way of putting it, thoroughly in keeping with the whole hypocritical affair.

"Then ask him to be good enough to see me when he has time," he said irritably.

"What do you want, Rivette?" The skipper started in his seat to find Manoel Carto smilingly rubbing his hands together. He had come into the saloon while he had been talking. The steward vanished.

"I wanted to talk to you about carting that fellow aboard—this abduction you dragged me into. Do you realise what it means to me if we are caught?" His voice rose in a gust of passion. "It's ruin, I tell you!"

Carto sat down on the red plush seat, still smiling. "Well, you've faced that before now. What's new in that?"

"Just that I'm tired of it. I want to know what you are planning, really. I won't follow you blindly again. I'm finished!"

"But listen to me, Rivette. You speak as though your reputation were spotless. That's sheer nonsense. You've had smuts on it for ten years to my knowledge—everybody on the Coast knows you're a wrong 'un. If you're caught, they'll only say: 'That scallywag Rivette has been careless and burnt his fingers!' That's what you're called—a scallywag—and a fitting name, too!"

"Anyway, I can't replace a lost ticket. And the past is the past. Let it alone."

"Quite." Carto spoke thoughtfully.

"Perhaps, let's say, you're in need of a rest. I'll tell you what we'll do. Finish this job and take the *Lucia* for a year's straight trading. What do you think?"

"It would suit me. But you must be frank over this show. I must know what your object is." The skipper's tone weakened; already he was losing his resolution under Carto's persuasive tongue.

The owner smiled broadly. "Oh, this is safe enough. He has a lot of rough rubies, this chap, which an agent of mine sold to him in Zanzibar. We're going to have them back again—by force, if necessary."

"But the man hasn't got them in his pockets?"

"No. But we'll make him write a note to his boy to bring them aboard. Then we'll take them from the boy. I'll make a doctored drink for this Edwards—he'll be thirsty enough by then—and we'll dump him ashore. It will be dark, and somebody will pick him up—to all appearances hopelessly drunk!"

"And how do we explain the fact that his jewels came aboard this schooner and he left without them? How do we explain that away?"

"That's quite simple. When he's found, he's lost the stones. We say he refused to sell them—drank too much whisky and then insisted on going home. Obviously someone has robbed him on shore. That's what we'll say. I'll send some of the crew to hustle him about; then he'll believe it himself. Where's the risk?" Carto grinned with evil satisfaction.

"None, apparently. But suppose he won't write that note?"

"He'll stay here until he writes—or dies of thirst," said Carto coolly. "I want you to do the persuading, Rivette."

"I won't! I refuse absolutely to do it for anybody!" The skipper flushed with angry determination.

"Be reasonable, my dear chap. After all, your share will be almost five hundred pounds. It's good pay for a few minutes' work."

"I refuse," said Rivette sullenly.

"Then you lose that certificate of yours!" Manoel Carto slumped into his seat and regarded his skipper with a coldly malicious air. The sailor, terrified by the sudden turn of events, drank his tea thirstily.

"And will this be the last affair?" The words slipped from his lips almost involuntarily.

"We shall see."

"I refuse to do anything until I have a definite promise," protested Rivette desperately. "Unless it is the last of this crookedness, I refuse to lift a finger to help you!"

"I advise you to think it over," said Carto heavily. He lounged from the saloon, moving with the grace of a cat, despite his weight.

Walter Rivette stayed on, utterly demoralised by the failure of his latest effort to assert his independence. He knew, as did his employer, that he would succumb again just as he had done on previous occasions.

"Called a scallywag!" The words occurred to him again. True, he supposed, but a scallywag who had not reaped the profits of his work. Seldom was he given a share in the plunder; most of the time he had to be satisfied with twenty pounds a month and his food. Little enough for the wreck of a reputation.

Step by step he went over his career in retrospect, searching for the cause of his downfall. He had been sent down from Oxford—why? So far as he could see, because he had not possessed the strength of mind to withstand the temptations of a notorious set. They had snared him, and he had come to the same Fate as they.

And then his father had sent him to sea. He had done well and contrived to take his master's ticket. But before he had set foot on his first ship, a man had tried to persuade him into a shady job. Rivette had not even agreed; he had considered it for a time, but in the interval it had leaked out somehow, and tongues had wagged. And from that to the bridge of Manoel Carto's dirty little boat had been a series of easy steps, an almost imperceptible dropping in the scale.

He did not pity himself; he had deserved it. Everything had been due to his fatal habit of listening to the devil in his most alluring moments, and to the weakness which prevented him from disowning the dishonesty.

Rivette fumbled for his pipe. A hideous presentiment of failure pressed on him; in imagination he was already a convicted criminal. If only he had acted when the natives had appeared in the *café* last night!

He got up and moved to his cabin, which opened off the saloon. Searching amongst the litter of his things for a tin of tobacco, he heard the click of a turning key.

He wheeled round and tried the handle of the door. It was locked. "Now, Rivette, you will stay here until this affair is over. I can't have rebellious skippers interfering in my business." Carto's voice sounded through the door. "Make yourself comfortable. You may have to wait some time."

"Wait! What's the idea of this, Carto? Let me out!"

The only reply was a short laugh and silence. Presently Rivette heard the dinghy grinding against the schooner's side. The splash of an oar drifted to him, gradually dying away. Carto had gone ashore, presumably on business connected with Edwards.

The skipper shrugged his shoulders helplessly and climbed into his bunk. As the smoke of his pipe drifted towards the ceiling, he was filled with a deep disgust of his surroundings. He loathed the neglected, ill-found ship; he loathed the people; suddenly he found himself loathing the feebleness which had brought him to such a pass.

"It's disgusting," he thought. "Sheer stupidity and drivelling weakness. I'm too stupid to see where I'm drifting, and when I do, I'm too much of a rat to make a kick against it. That's all. I've drifted to the devil in the last year or two."

A resolution occurred to him. "I'll put a spoke in that filthy dago's wheel yet," he muttered aloud. "Locked up here like a convict! He must think I'm dangerous. I wonder?"

Astonished and almost bewildered by the thought—the first clear reasoning he had done for years—Rivette lay back on his pillow, watching the glimmering reflection of the water that came through the glass of the porthole, revolving the idea slowly in his mind, turning it over and pondering it from all angles.

"It's true," he decided. "That beast is afraid of me, whatever he may say!"

He was startled by a low groan from the other side of the partition. It was repeated. Evidently Edwards was imprisoned in Carto's cabin. Rivette raised himself on his elbow.

"Edwards!" he called softly. That Goanese brute would be prowling close, keeping guard, he remembered. His voice was little more than a whisper. "Edwards!"

The only answer was a grunt. "Gagged still," thought Rivette. He lay back in the bunk. "I think I'll have a talk with this

chap and put him up to Carto's game. I'll show Manoel he can't abuse me!"

His vanity was touched. He sprang to his feet and tried the lock, an old-fashioned heavy thing of brass, solid beyond the efforts of a knife.

Rivette abandoned it, spun about, climbed to the porthole. The grime of years was embedded about its frame—he could not move it. He found his knife and worked round the edges, clearing the catch of grease and prying loose the dirt. The cabin was stifling; sweat ran down his face in irritating rivulets. He kept on steadily, spurred to a nervous energy by the dread of Carto's return.

At last the bolts began to turn slowly under his wrenching efforts. When the last one gave and the porthole opened to the air, he thrust his head through it, gasping for breath.

"Thank goodness he has not come back!" he sighed. Carto was still ashore; the stretch of water between the *Santa Lucia* and the wharf was empty.

Rivette glanced along the ship's side. Towards the bows a rope dangled untidily to the water's edge. He wriggled through the porthole, hung for a second and dropped with a splash into the water. Noiselessly he worked his way to the line, seized it and hoisted himself aboard.

The skipper hung from the rail for a moment, looked round the deck, and passed silently aft. In three seconds he stood outside the cabin door. Listening, he heard the heavy breathing of Edwards. The key had been left in the lock. By degrees he turned it, and found himself looking down on the prisoner.

"Promise me you won't shout if I take the gag away," he whispered. Edwards nodded dumbly.

With a twist of his knife he severed the cord. Edwards smiled. "Thanks! That confounded thing almost choked me."

"I'm the skipper of this schooner," explained Rivette. "My name is Walter Rivette."

"Yes?"

"For reasons of my own, I want to help you to get out of this. I came along for that purpose. You know what Carto is up to, of course?"

"I suppose he thinks he is going to rob me," said Edwards curtly.

"And he'd do it fast enough. Don't make any mistake, Carto is not a person to threaten for the sake of talking."

"I know he said he'd starve me to death if I didn't send for those stones," admitted Edwards ruefully. "One couldn't be black-mailed in that way, you know. So I'd resigned myself to my fate."

"You'll have to get out of this ship quickly," reminded the skipper. "He'll be back soon, and, with the crew, you'd have no chance in a fight." He hacked at the ropes which bound the tall Edwards into the bunk.

"Oh, but that won't do at all," protested the prisoner. "How about you? Won't you have to face the row yourself if I go ashore?"

Rivette scowled. "Don't you think about that. I've several scores of my own to settle. They might as well be done now."

Edwards smiled. "Couldn't I help? After all, I owe him for an uncomfortable night."

"I'd rather you went."

"All right. I'll say nothing to the police. But you must look me up sometime. I'm three miles up the valley. And, by the way, if you lose your job, remember that I want a manager—if you think you would like to tackle it."

"Don't talk rubbish. It wouldn't do. You don't know it, I suppose, but we are no credit to anyone—we of the *Santa Lucia*."

Rivette stopped talking and thrust forward his head. From outside came the sound of voices and the rhythmic grind of oars. "That's Carto!" he snapped. "Out you go! Get over the starboard side and lie low until they've come aboard."

"Oh, I'll stay," said the tall man easily. "I might as well give you a hand."

They fell silent as the boat bumped against the schooner's side and the tramp of feet became audible overhead. They heard Carto's voice talking to the Goanese steward.

The door was flung open and the owner entered, his brows lowered in a furious scowl. When he saw Rivette he stopped. His thin lips twisted in a grin.

"You let him loose, I suppose?" he demanded curtly.

"I did, and he is going to stay loose." Rivette was almost astonished to find that he had no fear of the huge figure; Carto's anger did not crush him as it had done.

"What the deuce do you mean by it?" The owner fumbled in his pocket. "You're both on my ship, and you will stay until I've done with you. I've a good mind to sling you over the side, you rat! I suppose you've given the whole thing away?"

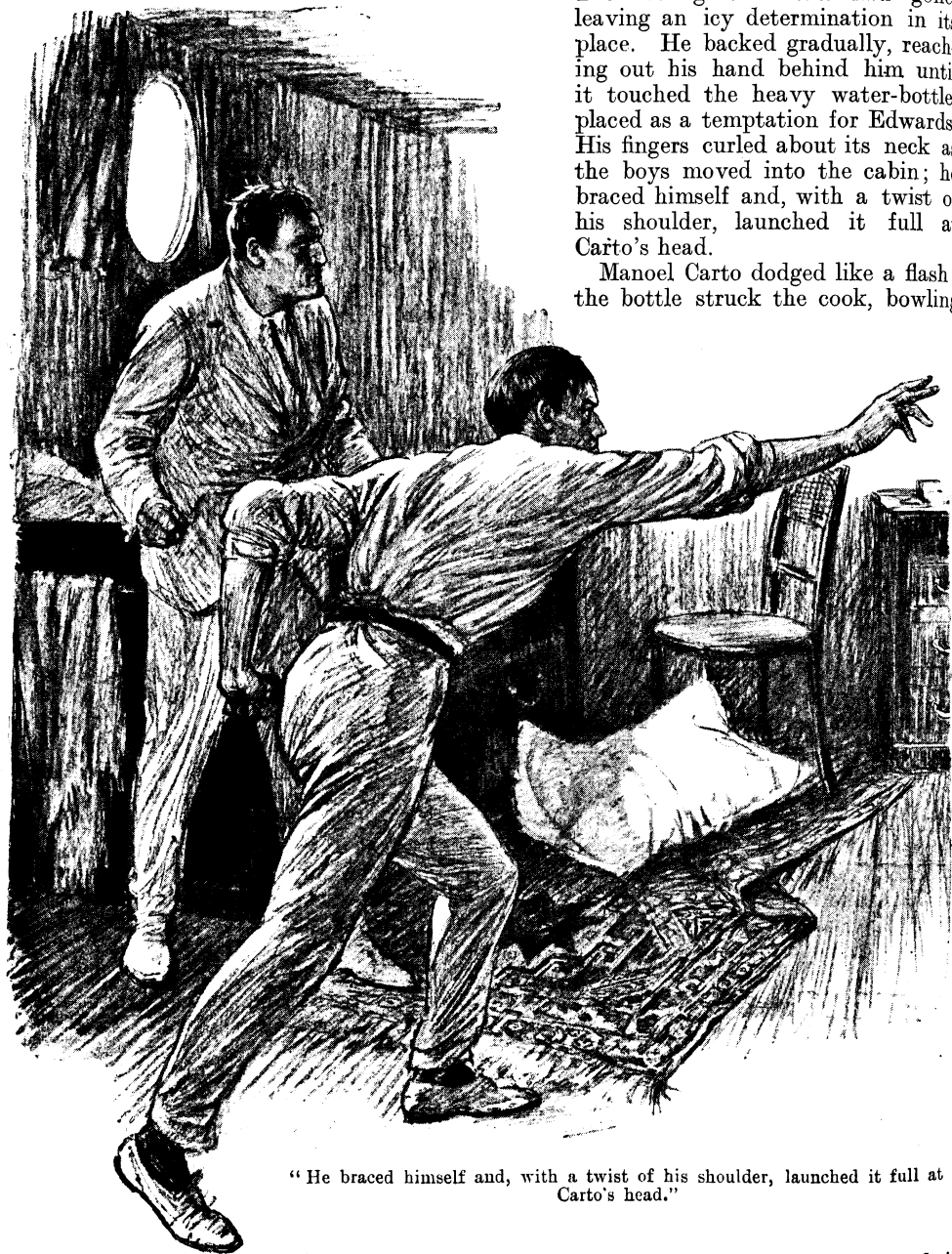
"I told him, yes," said Rivette coolly. "You'd better let him go, Carto. You and I can settle our quarrels alone."

"You will stay here." Manoel Carto

"Tie those men up!" commanded Carto. He pulled a revolver from his pocket. "If you resist, I'll shoot you!"

Rivette felt curiously calm and unexcited. The feeling of dread had gone, leaving an icy determination in its place. He backed gradually, reaching out his hand behind him until it touched the heavy water-bottle, placed as a temptation for Edwards. His fingers curled about its neck as the boys moved into the cabin; he braced himself and, with a twist of his shoulder, launched it full at Carto's head.

Manoel Carto dodged like a flash; the bottle struck the cook, bowling



"He braced himself and, with a twist of his shoulder, launched it full at Carto's head."

whistled shrilly, and the sound of scuffling feet came from the deck. The natives, led by the squinting cook-boy, pushed their way into view, an ugly crowd.

him into the arms of his companions, shrill with fear.

Rivette sprang forward as Carto strove to recover his balance. His head crashed into his enemy's face. His lean fingers

sought Carto's throat. Edwards sprang to his aid. Between them they forced him to the ground, and Rivette twisted the revolver from his powerful grasp.

Rivette, kneeling on the writhing shoulders, saw a seaman jump forward, knife upheld. He fired again and again into the crowd. The natives backed, roared in terror, and fled in a body. Edwards jerked a sheet from the bunk. "Let's tie him up with this!" he growled.

"It's my job," snarled Rivette. "Go away!"

with a crash, his head against the edge of the door. His body relaxed and rolled over; his hand fell with a thump to the floor.

Walter Rivette stood over him, breathing



"Manoel Carto dodged like a flash; the bottle struck the cook."

Carto, with a tremendous heave, flung them aside and staggered to his feet. The skipper, his face dripping sweat, threw a dank lock of hair from his eyes and sprang again to the attack.

Locked together, they swayed about the narrow cabin. Rivette shifted his grip, felt his fingers seized between Carto's strong yellow teeth and, driven wild with the pain, thrust forward in a last effort to free himself.

Carto swayed, tried to recover, and fell

jerkily. "Now we'll see who's the dog! We'll see who is master and who obeys!" he gasped. "Get off this ship, Edwards. The crew will come back in a moment."

"Go easy!" growled Edwards. "You've half killed him. You'd better come ashore with me."

The skipper hesitated. "All right," he said presently. His passion had gone, and he felt very tired. "Better out of it altogether, I suppose. Let's go."



The crew of the *Santa Lucia* had disappeared below. No one stopped them; the ship was still and soundless. The two men dropped overside into the dinghy. Edwards unshipped the oars and pushed her away. Walter Rivette dipped his handkerchief into the water and bathed his face as they crept steadily towards the wharf.

"I owe you a good deal over this business," said Edwards. "I wish you'd consider that job of mine. I'd be very grateful. My boys need a firm hand just now."

Rivette twisted his handkerchief dry and thrust it into his pocket. "A firm hand,"

he reflected. "The firm hand of that weakling Rivette!" The thought astounded him.

A twisted smile crossed his bruised features. "Some day, Edwards, but not just yet. Wait till I've cleared up a misapprehension of my character that's got about this coast, then I'll come."

The boat bumped against the wharf. Walter Rivette sprang ashore, looked out at the *Santa Lucia*, and straightened his shoulders.

"That scallywag Rivette!" he murmured. "Well, we'll see!"

## THE MOOR.

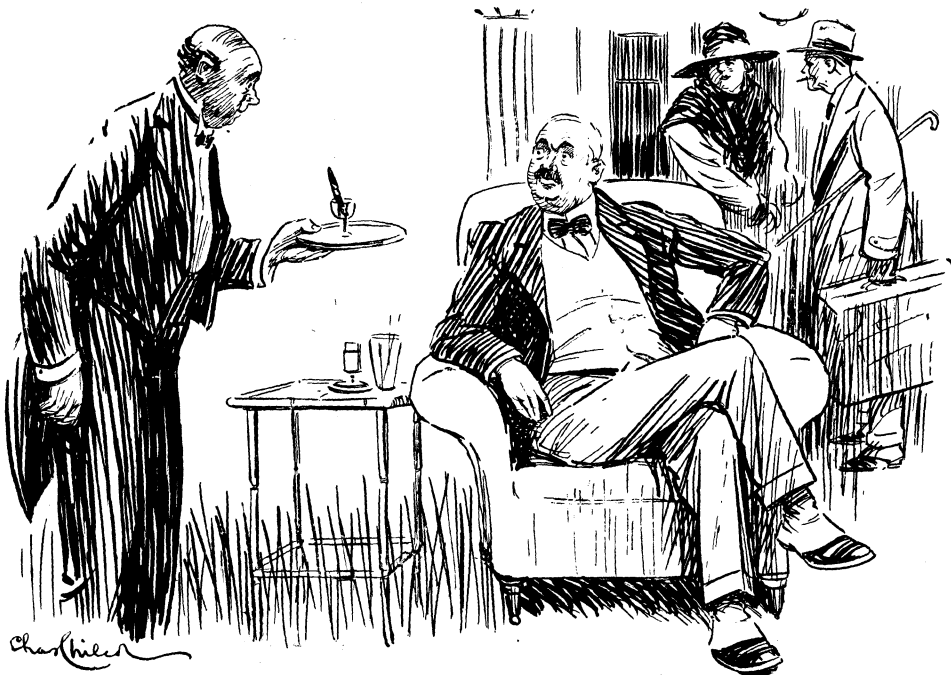
A SPANISH SLEEP-SONG.

**B**BROWN and thin, brown and poor,  
 From house to house now goes the Moor,  
 The Moorish woman dark and old,  
 With earrings of the red, red gold.  
 Low at every door she knocks,  
 Hark, her gentle tread!  
 "Curly-locks! Curly-locks!  
 Is my dear in bed?"  
 Says the Moor.

Soft and slow, soft and sweet,  
 She strokes the child from head to feet:  
 He sees her mantle's shadowy fold,  
 Her earrings of the red, red gold.  
 While the drowsy cradle rocks,  
 Hark, her gentle tread!  
 "Curly-locks! Curly-locks!  
 Is my dear in bed?"  
 Says the Moor.

Kind and tall, kind and grey,  
 She comes a-tinkling down the way:  
 They sound like sheep-bells in the fold,  
 Her earrings of the red, red gold.  
 Listen, now she stops, she knocks,  
 Little sleepy-head!  
 "Curly-locks! Curly-locks!  
 Here's my dear in bed!"  
 Says the Moor.

MAY BYRON.



A CRITIC OF CUSTOM.

BINKS (who dislikes the waiter's method of bringing him a cigar): I'm not going to drink it, you know; I want it to smoke.

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### BAD EGGS AND GOOD.

By T. A. Lowe.

JOHNNIE MCCALLUM was an easy-going fellow, and loved a life of pleasant routine. He had that happy, dreamy nature which instinctively avoids discomfort. Fuss and discordant noises he hated from the depths of his complacent soul.

It was quite certain, therefore, that when he married he should choose a woman who was inclined to be fussy. After all, "somebody had to wear the trousers" in a hard and practical world, and Katie McCallum realised, soon after her wedding, that if she didn't, nobody else in the household would.

One morning, when Johnnie was in the act of sneaking off to his sanctum with the morning paper, his wife craftily intercepted him in the hall. "You must come with me to the Stores," she announced firmly.

"But why?" inquired Johnnie.

"Because I intend to interview the manager about those eggs."

"What eggs?"

"Why, the rotten ones I told you about at breakfast, of course. There were three in the last dozen, and it's disgraceful."

"And what do you want me to do?" groaned Johnnie.

"You must come with me," said his wife emphatically, "and I will explain that you are my husband, and that you are very annoyed about it. Then, perhaps, he will do something."

So Johnnie accompanied his wife to the Stores that morning. He hated going, and knew there would be a scene when he got there, but he was quite unprepared for the shock of seeing the manager send for an assistant in the grocery department and sack him summarily for carelessness. Johnnie thought this a thoroughly ungentlemanly thing to do in public: besides—and the thought troubled his generous soul keenly—the poor fellow was wearing medal ribbons on his waistcoat.

However, at lunch Katie seemed quite pleased with herself, and chatted brightly about the improvement which would undoubtedly take place in the Stores' service. For the sake of peace, Johnnie agreed, but his heart was heavy within him.

Try as he might in the after-lunch seclusion of his den, Johnnie could not get the thought of the poor grocery assistant out of his mind. Imagination pictured the fellow brought, perhaps, to destitution through no fault of his own. And who could tell but that a wife and children might be concerned in the matter? The

thought became unbearable. Seizing his hat, he slipped out and walked quickly towards the Stores. He would see the manager again and plead that the grocery assistant might be retained.

But on arrival at the manager's office, Johnnie perceived that the room was occupied. The door was ajar, and a lady was standing in the middle of the floor, addressing the manager in tones of great agitation; and then came familiar words of stern rebuke.

"Good Heavens," thought Johnnie, "another poor fellow getting the sack! Things seem lively to-day in these parts." Then the door opened suddenly, and, wearing a hang-dog look, out walked the self-same assistant who had been sacked that morning.

"Hello!" said Johnnie, nodding cheerfully. "In trouble again, I see."

For a moment the man paused and stared, then, turning abruptly on his heel, he walked away.

But Johnnie was not to be beaten so easily; in a flash he was in pursuit, and caught the man by the shoulder.

"I say, old sportsman," he began, "you mustn't take things to heart like that. I'm on my way to see the manager, and I think I can square things up a bit for you. He'll take you on again, mark my words."

The discharged assistant looked at Johnnie, and there was a suspicion of a twinkle in his eye.

"Bless you, sir, it ain't any use doing that," he said. "I'm the bloke wot's kept 'ere to be sacked. This morning it was to please your missus, and this afternoon it was to please 'er." He jerked his thumb towards the lady still engaged in hot argument with the manager.

For a moment Johnnie scratched his chin in bewilderment, and then his face broke into a beaming smile.

"Good egg, old sportsman!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, slapping his new-found friend on the back. "Jolly good egg!"

ACCORDING to a member of the National Rose Society, roses will soon be blooming all the year round. Will some lyric writer kindly meet the situation by producing a song entitled "The First Rose of Winter"?



A LECTURER who was staying at a house in a country town where many good things had been prepared for his coming, disappointed his



FRANK WHITBURN

DELICATE GROUND.

HE (having wired his wife to meet him in Town): But I thought I asked you not to bring your mother.

SHE: I know, darling; that's what she wants to see you about—she read your wire!

hostess by declining her best dishes, giving as an excuse that he never could eat just before he lectured, as it hindered his oratory. She herself did not go to the lecture, but her husband did, and when he returned she called out before he could mount the stairs: "Well, how did he speak?"

From the floor below the answer was shouted: "He might as well have eaten!"

## AGGRESSION AND THE AGE.

By J. Roland Fay.

THERE were sounds as of a scuffle; a shuffling of youthful shoes upon the pavement behind me, together with a scattering of light but varied objects; there were sounds of blows of a semi-muffled kind, produced, apparently, by a weapon of a slack and saggy nature, which I subsequently found to have been a school satchel. There were no voices; this proved the grim deadliness of the conflict.

Suddenly the battle ceased. A voice was

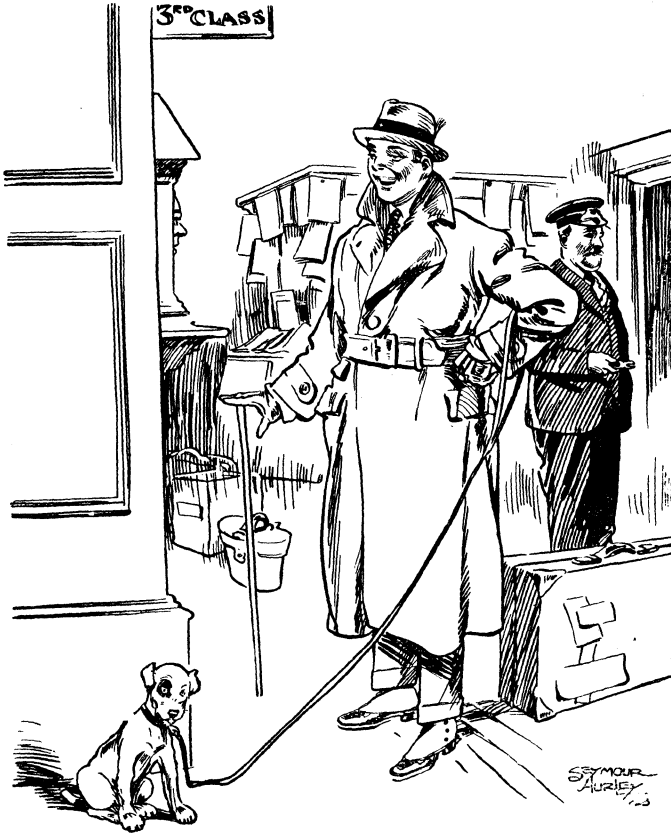
moved slowly away, clattering his ruler in the iron railings as he went.

"I hope he has not hurt you," the voice continued. But the two little girls made no answer; they both merely stared abstractedly at me as an object entirely outside the matter in hand, although, it seemed, acutely conscious of the voice above them, which continued to offer condolence and advice.

"I should keep out of the way of such horrid little boys," concluded their voluntary protector, with a cold glance at the retreating figure of the small boy. Then she moved on in the opposite direction.

One little girl gazed after her; her face wore a most ungentle scowl. She said a few words to the other, among which I caught "interference" and something about "minding her own business."

The other contemplated the distant figure of the small boy. "Never mind," she said, as she nodded her head threateningly after him; "we'll catch him again; we'll wait for him as he comes from school to-morrow." And they both began to gather up their scattered school books.



IN SPITE OF APPEARANCES.

TRAVELLER: I suppose I have to take a ticket for a puppy?  
HARRASSED BOOKING CLERK (not seeing puppy): Not at all, sir. You can travel as an ordinary passenger!

heard—a voice that was firm yet feminine, stern yet kind. "A right-minded boy should be ashamed of such cowardly behaviour," it said. I turned. Two flushed and wrathful little girls glared at one pale and sullen little boy, and particularly avoided the calmly indignant face above them whence the voice proceeded.

The boy, to whom the words were directed, gazed steadfastly upon the pavement; upon further reproof, he stooped, gathered up a ruler and a broken pencil box with such of its original contents as were within reach, and

in So-and-So's, the rose-growers', offices the other day, when I was waiting while they attended to another customer. I saw a couple of green flies examining the books, when the staff were not looking, to see the addresses of their principal customers."

"I HEAR that the De Joneses have bought a new two-seater."

"Yes, I've seen the nursemaid pushing it with the twins inside."

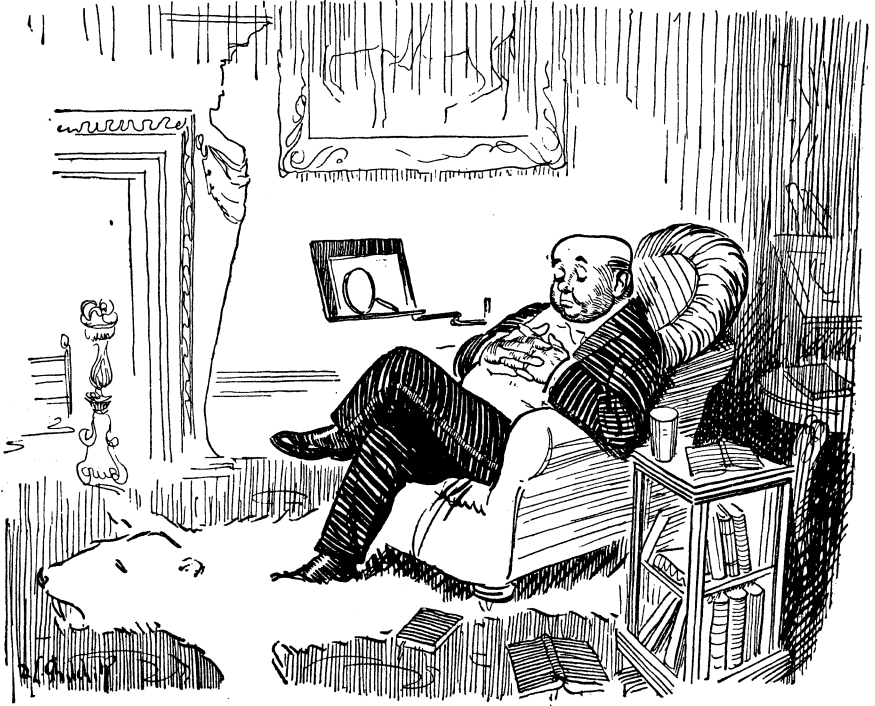
## DOMESTIC INSURANCE.

*By R. K. Risk.*

As Eileen had just completed a course at a secretarial college and another course in domestic science, she seemed a fit and proper person to deal with domestic insurance. I told her to write to the Emyrean Company, intimating a claim, stating the facts and taking care not to commit herself to the amount of damage until it could be ascertained. After due thought she submitted this letter:—

"Goes a bit beyond the essential facts, doesn't it? That about the bath being unoccupied at the time, and the charges of laundries, and Henrietta not being killed."

"What you want to do, in a letter of this sort," Eileen said confidently, "is to create an atmosphere in the insurance office. If you make the manager feel that he is very lucky in getting off with a small doctor's bill, when he might have had one for funeral expenses and compensation to re-



A CHARACTER STUDY.

PORTRAIT of a gentleman who claims a nodding acquaintance with most of the poets.

The Manager of the Emyrean Insurance Co.  
Domestic Policy No. 5432X 51.

DEAR SIR,

I have pleasure in informing you that when our domestic servant yesterday, about 11 a.m., fell through the skylight into the bath, which was fortunately unoccupied at the time, she was not killed, but escaped with several cuts and bruises, a sprained ankle, and general shock to the nervous system. She was engaged, at the time of the accident, in airing blankets on the roof, owing to the excessive charges of laundry companies. She is being attended by Dr. Septimus Lockitt, 15, Barnminster Crescent, Bayswater, who is unable to say at present when she will be able to resume her duties.

"There," she said, after I had read the letter, "that seems just right. It covers all the facts and doesn't commit us to anything."

latives, he'll be less likely to haggle over a five-pound claim."

"Possibly. But about the laundry charges?"

"That is to explain why Henrietta was on the roof, and that we have nothing to conceal. It may save him asking a lot of silly questions. What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing. I think it is a capital letter. Fire it in, and see what happens."

Two days later I handed Eileen an unopened letter bearing the insignia of the Emyrean. "Your pidgin," I said, and watched her over the top of my newspaper.

She opened the envelope, extracted two documents from it, and her face fell, as the minor novelists used to say. However, she caught it neatly on the rebound, and smiled.

"Great Marlow!" she said. "They've sent a form with about eighteen questions to be

answered. So that's what you were grinning about on Tuesday."

"They are rather inquisitive people, insurance managers."

"Then we must try to satisfy their curiosity," said Eileen mildly.

That night she handed me the schedule of printed questions headed "Employer's Notice of Injury Form." There were eleven questions-in-chief and, including sub-questions, eighteen queries in all. On the blank half side of the sheet she had typewritten, "See Schedule of Answers 1 to 11 on document annexed as relative hereto."

"What on earth are you driving at?" I said. "Don't you know these questions should be answered in the blanks provided for that purpose?"

"There wasn't room," Eileen said. "And it looks jolly official, that 'annexed as relative hereto.' You read the questions, old man, and I'll read the answers, and you can tell me if they are full enough."

"Right," I said. "'No. 1. Number of policy.' You've got that? 'No. 2(a) Name and address of injured servant.'"

"'Henrietta Ruby Worple.' I needn't read the address."

"'2 (b) Nearest railway station.'"

"'Metro Station, Notting Hill Gate, is absolutely the nearest by about fifteen yards. On the Central London,

if you come from Town, Queen's Road is, perhaps, a little further away in actual measurement, but then you save the train time between that station and Notting Hill Gate. But if you are coming from Ealing Broadway, Notting Hill Gate is nearer, in point of time as well as actual yardage. If you are coming from Cornwall, Paddington is the nearest, and if from Scotland, Euston is a little nearer than St. Pancras or King's Cross. If you are coming from Brighton, see reference to Metro Station.'"

"'2 (c) Occupation.' Domestic servant, I suppose. '2 (d) Age.'"

"Approximately thirty-five," said Eileen. "That was as near as Henrietta could get to it, or as near as she would let me get to it. Then 3 (a and b) are weekly wage, one pound, and yes, that she receives board and lodging."

"'4,' I said. "'State fully the work upon which the injured servant was engaged at the time of the accident, and how it occurred.'"

"'Airing blankets on the roof, as explained in letter of 7th inst. intimidating accident. The primary cause, as explained in letter, was the excessive prices charged by laundries. The secondary cause was that people on adjacent roofs, from the same primary cause, appeared to be airing blankets with celerity and success. The tertiary cause was that an aeroplane passed overhead just when the aforesaid Henrietta Ruby Worple was reaching up with a clothespin, she having other two in her mouth. The distraction thus caused made her stumble over ledge on the leads and sit down suddenly on



ENOUGH AND TO SPARE.

MOTHER: Now, Freddy, get your cap and go with Grandpa, and remember not to walk too fast for him; he's very short of breath, you know.

FREDDY: He's not, Mummie; he beeves a lot more than I do.

the bathroom skylight. The quaternary cause was that the wooden frame between two large panes of glass gave way with the weight of the aforesaid Henrietta Ruby Worple, which is estimated at ten stones four pounds, thus precipitating the broken frame, the fragments of glass, and the aforesaid Henrietta Ruby Worple into the bath, mentioned in my letter to you of 7th inst.' That should do for that. Then '5 (a). When did the accident occur, day and hour?—March 5, 11.4 a.m. 5 (b). When did

the injured servant cease work?—See 5 (a) supra. 5 (c). Where did it happen?' (Nearest railway station)—See 2 (b) supra. They do seem to worry about the nearest railway station. I nearly put in the 'bus routes here, just to show a helpful spirit. '6. Nature of injuries—Same as in letter. 7. Totally or partially disabled?'—I've said that the percentage of disablement is eighty. You see, she can still sit at a table and peel potatoes, and write letters to her young man in the country. So that answers also '7 (b)—If partially disabled, state value of present services.'"

"We are getting through it nicely," I said. "'8. Who witnessed the accident?'"

"'Nobody, except perhaps the airman above-

symptoms are due wholly to shock and not to any internal injury. The answer to 11 is the doctor's name and address over again. I haven't scrimped them for information, have I?"

About a week later Eileen handed me an envelope containing five Treasury notes of one pound.

"From the Emphyrean," she said, "with the manager's love. Your share of the spoil. Two pounds will pay Henrietta's wages for two weeks of partial disablement, and three guineas will square off six visits from old Seppy. He paid the last to-day. Wasn't it nice of them to offer a cheque for ten pounds, in full of all claims, and make it payable to me?"

"M'yes. I suppose they would rather do



A CHARLATAN.

"I 'EARD to-day as 'ow yon P'rofessor chap who lives up th' road yonder 'as just wrote a book about Mars."  
 "'Mars? What do 'e know about Mars? Why, to my certain know'ledge 'e ain't bin out o' this 'ere village for six year!"

mentioned; but Henrietta Ruby Worple did not think at the time of taking his number, and we were too busy, picking her out of the bath, to think of going up on the roof to look out for him again."

"'9. If the accident was not witnessed, please give your reasons, if any, for supposing that it arose out of and in the course of the injured servant's employment for you."

"See 4 supra." said Eileen gaily. "How silly men are! 'No. 10, probable length of disablement.' I said about three weeks, unless a small bone in the sprained ankle has been broken, and that the doctor says it may have to be X-rayed, and that he hopes the nervous

that than get any more letters from you. What about the other five pounds?"

"Unkist, unkind," said Eileen, pecking me on the lobe of the right ear. "Two pounds is for temporary help—mine, you know. And I saw such a posh little hatlet in Knightsbridge to-day. Shall I take you to see it to-morrow?"

"'Fraid I'm too busy."

"'Fraid you would be," said Eileen. "That's why I've got it on now."



HEARING that Sweden has not had a war for a hundred years, an enterprising Central American Republic has offered to broadcast a few.

## THE CONSCIENTIOUS TRAVELLER.

By R. T. Lee.

Of course one knows that when one goes abroad, even if it is only for a fortnight, custom demands that one shall bring home some trifle for one's children, or, if one has no children, then for one's nearest relations. When we went abroad, however, my wife, as soon as we had settled down on the cross-Channel boat, produced pencil and paper and compiled a formidable list of "people we must get a little present for." It started with our children, worked down through our parents, our near and distant relatives, one or two neighbours and their relatives who were staying with them, and ended with our servants. Why the very casual labourer, who pulls up three or four weeds in our garden half a day a week, was omitted, I am at a loss to say.

On arriving at Dieppe we strolled outside the station for a few minutes. I looked round to find my wife's face glued to a shop window.

"Do you see something you want?" I asked.

"I was thinking whether Mary would like one of those little dolls. They are rather sweet, aren't they?" said my wife. "So very French."

"But are you going to start collecting presents already?" I asked.

"Well, it's no use leaving everything to the last minute: you know we've a lot to get," replied my wife.

"Yes," I said. "I think you counted twenty-three on your list."

At Paris we nearly missed the connection because my wife could not make up her mind whether her Aunt Eleanor would prefer a miniature bottle of liqueur or a silk shawl. I plumped for the liqueur, which was much the cheaper. That settled it: my wife decided that she liked the shawl best. In fact, she liked it so much that she is wearing it still.

After leaving Paris we were safe in a train until we reached Italy. Then the quest began in earnest. The hours of daylight were spent between Duomos and shop-windows; Tintoretto's and Botticelli's alternated with bead necklaces and stamped-leather goods (the sort you see in all the Regent Street shops). Early dawn and bedtime found my wife distractedly ticking off on her list the people for whom presents were still lacking.

"We shall never get it done," she would say



SPADEWORK

WORKMAN (to foreman): Can't make out 'ow you came ter take that bloke on.

FOREMAN: Said 'e was good with the shovel.

WORKMAN: Yus, 'e is—frying bacon on it!

in an agonised tone. "We've got nothing yet for Muriel, or Mother, or Aunt Eva, or Mrs. Forman, or that companion of hers, or for cook."

I think Mrs. Forman caused the most trouble. There was no particular reason why we should take her a present, except that she lived



opposite us and borrowed our mowing-machine. Little did the poor, simple soul know how large on our holiday horizon loomed her supposed yearning for a souvenir of our visit to Italy.

"I think I shall get her one of those red bead necklaces; I know she has a red hat," said my wife.

"But," I argued, "she can get one like that at the local shop."

"Don't you see," said my wife, "that it makes all the difference if it comes from the Rialto. It will be a memento."

"After all," I suggested, "it can hardly remind her of a place she has never been to."

However, the red bead necklace was added to the other seventeen varieties already purchased.

By diligent and exhaustive searching through many Italian cities, we gradually achieved the apparent object of our holiday, for we had provided for everybody. It was, perhaps, a small matter that we missed seeing the Boboli Gardens on our last morning in Florence through having to go and buy a small cabin trunk to take the presents home.

A slight cloud overspread our return journey, owing to my wife remembering that we had nothing for Mrs. Forman's companion. I suggested that when next Mrs. Forman borrowed our mowing-machine we might also lend the companion our garden roller. I was not encouraged to make any further suggestions.

When we got home, the presents made a fine show. A little rearrangement was natural. For instance, Mrs. Forman's hat, through the agency of "Twink," having turned blue during our absence, our cook got the red necklace, and Mrs. Forman was allotted cook's gondola inkpot. Aunt Eleanor —

whose shawl had been misappropriated — and Mrs. Forman's companion were, however, so on my wife's conscience that next day I brought back from London a Florentine pottery vase and a blotter of Venetian leather-work.

"You don't mean to say you can get those things in England," said my wife.

Next time we intend going abroad I mean to do a little shopping on my own in London



JUST ABOUT.

"How long has she been playing auction-bridge?"  
"Oh, about three cheque books!"

the week before, and get all this present business fixed up before we start.



We read that a preparation of coal-dust is now being used to beautify the eyes. When ordering, you should state whether you prefer Wallsend or Silkstone eyes.



## THE IDEAL SUPPER FOR CHILDREN

The foods for supper which delight and satisfy and yet do not tax digestion are  
—Puffed Rice and Puffed Wheat.—

Just think of that. Two great cereal foods which have nourished the nations for centuries, cooked by a wonderful “explosion” process which makes them more nutritious, more enticing, more easily  
—digested than ever.—

No cooking, no trouble. You buy Puffed Rice or Puffed Wheat all ready to eat, with hot or cold milk. Get a packet of each to prove which your family prefers.

# Puffed Puffed Rice *also* Wheat

The foods shot from guns

*Ready to serve*

The wonderful process of shooting rice and wheat from guns is described on the packets.

Guaranteed by

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MI

## A VEGETARIAN CONVERT.

*By Theta.*

UNTIL recently no man possessed a bigger contempt for vegetarians than Samuel Candiman. To him rice pudding could only appeal when he happened to run short of confetti at the weddings of his friends. To-day, however, Mr. Candiman has foresworn meat altogether, and this is how it occurred.

Knocking about the world as you do, you must often have read reports of burglaries under such headings as "Enjoyed Champagne

evidence seldom led to his apprehension. For Samuel, when sought out and questioned, usually had an alibi ready.

The night of his conversion was no exception to his general methods of work. It was what came to be known as the Casement Cottage Case. Casement Cottage, a mere hovel containing a meagre thirty-two bedrooms and bath h. and c., despite its unpicturesque exterior, was a crib worth cracking. The heirloom diamonds alone, which had been in the family for so many years—three, to be exact—were worth a king's ransom or an editor's income tax, and it was on these that Sam had his eye.

He knew that on this particular night the jewels would be at the Cottage, for he had read in the local press that their kindly owner had promised to take the chair at a penny reading in the parish church hall. She would be sure to wear them for such a function, and it would be too late afterwards to return them to the bank before the following morning.

And yet, when the time came to look for them, the diamonds were not to be found. Samuel and his collaborator—Casement Cottage was not a one-man job—made a thorough search of the premises while their victims slept the sleep induced by an evening of innocent gaiety, but all in vain. A certain amount of portable plunder was to be had, but no trace of the diamonds had either of them discovered when they

finally returned to the dining-room after visiting every other chamber. Sam's comrade was all for leaving at once with such spoil as they had already gathered, but that was not Sam's way.

"What about a bit of supper?" he said, and scornfully rejected his friend's suggestion that a mouthful of fruit, which was handy, would suffice. Sam meant to have his usual meal.

It must be admitted that the owner of Casement Cottage knew how to do himself



REEL-LY.

"Now, fancy that! Darning these 'ere socks makes me remember the length of that wonderful film I saw in London—it was fifteen skeins long."

Supper Before Leaving," or "An Epicure on the Scrounge," and have been informed how, in addition to purloining the plate, the mid-night visitors had looted the larder and made free use of the gas stove. Well, these feats, as often as not, were Samuel's.

Detectives would come next morning, inspect the crumbs on the dining-room druggot and murmur musingly, "Looks to me like Slippery Sam again. What do you say, Bill?" though this identification of his work by internal



## Her Crowning Glory

**I**N these days of fancy dress balls the woman with beautiful hair scores heavily over her less fortunate, or less careful, sister. A chance to let down her hair often reveals unsuspected beauties in

### A Comparatively Plain Woman

How often one hears it said, "I never thought X—— was pretty till I saw her with her hair down." And every woman knows the

### Secret Satisfaction

of having a gift which, though not always displayed to its fullest extent, can be relied on to inspire surprised admiration when it is given a chance to appear. But beautiful hair is

### Not a Matter of Luck,

it is a matter of incessant care, and, still more, of the choice of a really good shampoo. Nothing makes the hair so brilliant, soft, and rippling, as shampooing it with a teaspoonful of stallax granules. It brings out unsuspected lights in the dulllest hair, and gives to naturally pretty hair an incomparable burnished sheen. Besides this, it is really good for the hair, and makes it delightfully crisp, wavy, and easy to do up, even

### Directly after a Shampoo.

**Stallax Granules are stocked by every chemist in the United Kingdom.**



## No Excuse for a Bad Complexion Now!

Mercolized Wax is now on sale in 2/- jars! No longer need expense debar you from enjoying the perfect complexion that is every woman's heritage, for every woman has a beautiful skin underneath the old worn-out and discoloured outer one.

Now you, too, may employ the secret to which so many of our famous beauties attribute their perfect complexion. Mercolized Wax dissolves away the old dry skin, leaving behind the new healthy complexion, and with the old discoloured skin all the wrinkles and blemishes disappear. Surely, but almost imperceptibly, Mercolized Wax completes its wonderful transformation, till in about ten days' time you find yourself rejoicing in the perfect complexion you have always sought.

Any chemist can supply you with the new 2/- size. Be sure it is

# MERCOLIZED WAX

Price 2/- a jar.

uncommonly well. The food was all that an epicure could demand, and the wine was of Sam's favourite vintage—it had been a particularly good year for hops. He fared sumptuously and steadily for about an hour before he finally thought of leaving.

So far Mr. Candiman was as far from vegetarianism as ever. The conversion occurred next day, when he had the leisure to glance at his morning paper. He always took a deep interest in his press notices, but this time it was not the heading "Gourmet's Dishonest Courses" that attracted his attention, nor the flattering references to his coolness in stopping to partake of a leisurely meal and leaving half-a-crown and a complimentary note for the cook. The report went on to say: "Happily the family diamonds, which were actually in the dining-room, escaped the notice of the thieves."

"Actually in the dining-room," he soliloquised. "I wonder where?" And soon he knew.

For turning, as his wont was, to the paper's serial story, he found among the miscellaneous articles above it a note on the latest novelties in jewel cases. These, he read, are made to look like fruit in order to baffle burglars, and he had actually refused fruit at Casement Cottage. If only he had accepted his friend's suggestion and not insisted on more solid fare, the diamonds would have been his. If only—but it was too late now. All he could now do was to see that such an oversight could not occur again.

And then and there Samuel registered his vow that never again should a love of meat lure him from the path of plunder. Henceforth his should be a vegetarian life, so thoroughly did he mean to remove himself from temptation. Even for bananas—his pet aversion—he would begin to cultivate a taste.

Sorrowfully Mr. Samuel Candiman set his face toward the Strand.



A TEACHER at a certain women's college had as her guest for a few days a nephew aged three. He was a delightful little man, and, having no rival there, seemed in danger of being spoiled by his many admirers among the students. When, however, one of them asked him if he would not like to live there always, he shook his curly head in a most decided negative and exclaimed, with a sigh:

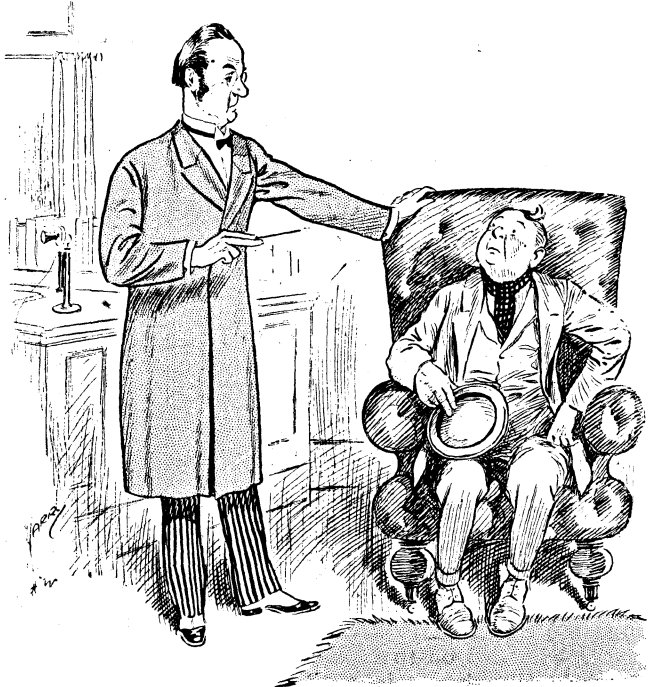
"Such a lot of women and stairs!"

*Facing Third Cover.]*

TIT FOR TAT.

Madam, may I inquire  
If you've your heart's desire?  
Or if the Fates conspire  
Harshly to flout you?  
It ill becomes the fair,  
This melancholy air  
Which I perceive you bear,  
Madam, about you.

Dear Madam, may I know  
If Cupid with his bow  
Has brought you down so low  
And set you sighing?  
If that your case should be,  
'Tis very sad to see,  
This roguish Love, so free  
His shafts a-flying.



AT CROSS PURPOSES.

SPECIALIST: And is it this ear that is causing the trouble?  
PATIENT: This 'ere wot?

But, Madam, all the same,  
You are yourself to blame,  
Since many I can name,  
Myself included,  
Who bore the self-same bane  
Whereof you now complain,  
And who laughed at their pain?  
Why, Madam, you did!

*Leopold Spero.*



MOTHER took little Tommy with her to a restaurant. After the luncheon had been served, she said—

"Now, Tommy, say grace, please."

"But, mother," he objected, "we're paying for this, aren't we?"

# THE WINDSOR

MAR 3 1924

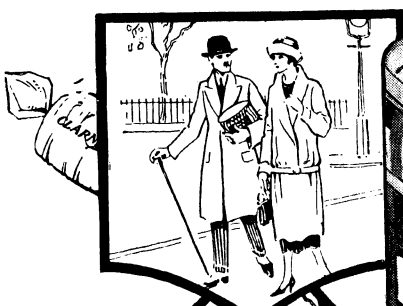
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Whatever your occupation there are sure to be "hungry moments" during the day—times when you feel the need of "something to chew." These are the times for LILY BRAZILS. These delicious morsels of pure sugar, butter and rich cream, plentifully studded with brazil nuts, are pure and wholesome, and do you good. Take some wherever you go. Eat a few in the middle of the morning, at tea-time and after dinner at night. 8d. per  $\frac{1}{4}$ -lb. everywhere.

Covered in rich chocolate, they are even more delicious and only cost 1d. more per quarter-pound.

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## LILY BRAZILS

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THE MOTHERS OF THE FOREST. BY FRED SLOCOMBE.

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"It was on the evening of the nineteenth of April, as Mrs. Willoughby and Herrick were returning by taxi from choosing a breakfast set."

# A PRIVATE SCANDAL

By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of "Valerie French," "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "Anthony Lyveden,"  
"The Brother of Daphne," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

COFFEE was served. Finally, liqueurs were offered. A moment later the servants withdrew silently, leaving the quartette to their cups.

The six shaded candles threw down upon the table a gentle light. This the silver and rosewood gave back vastly enriched. From a decanter before the host a fine old port rendered a comfortable glow. An onyx ash-tray and a match-box flashed by each painted plate; at either end of the table was a gold box of cigarettes; between the two men lay cigars; fruit was within reach; the board was not crowded, yet seemed to

be pleasantly full; upon the sideboard were remaining champagne, water, coffee and the little group of liqueurs.

The dinner had been perfect, the service superb; but then you had come to expect that at 20, Park Place. It was the Willoughbys' fault; from the day they were married they had always spoiled their guests.

Herrick looked across the violets at Eleanor Cloke.

"Kitchen, cellar, table and service," he said, "all one long last word. Nell, how do they do it?"

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Miss Cloke shrugged her white shoulders. "You can search me," she said hopelessly. "But don't dwell on it, or I shall burst into idle tears."

Madge Willoughby set down her cup.

"Why?" she demanded.

"Same as the Queen of Sheba," said Herrick hastily. "You know. She thought she knew how to live; but when she saw Solomon's idea of comfort—"

"Tell her," said Eleanor Cloke.

"I am," said Herrick. "Give me a chance. . . . Well, what really broke the Queen's heart was the poisonous reflection that for the rest of her life the King of Sheba would be saying 'My dear, why can't we have so-and-so? *Solomon has.*'"

His hostess leaned forward with parted lips.

"D'you mean that you're . . ."

David Herrick swallowed.

"Don't rush him," said Crispin Willoughby. "The roof of his mouth's dry." He turned to his faltering guest. "Moisten the lips, old bean, and let it come with the breath."

"I mean," said Herrick desperately, "that we're—we're thinkin' of joinin' up."

His hostess sighed contentedly.

"At last," she said.

Crispin turned to Miss Cloke.

"My dear," he said, "be careful. Have you ever seen him unshaved?"

"That," said Eleanor, "is a pleasure to come."

"Pleasure?" said Crispin. "Oh, she has got it bad. Never mind. Was you took ill gradual like, or was it all of a sudden that you came over queer?"

"To be perfectly frank," said Eleanor, "I've always liked the look of him."

Willoughby put up an eye-glass and inspected his prey.

"There is something rather winsome about that sheepish grin of his, isn't there? D'you see what I mean, Madge? That David's-my-name-but-call-me-Boris-look."

"What a shame," said his wife. "David, if I were Nell, I should be very proud."

"I am," said Eleanor. "When he seized me—"

"Oh, you story!" said David. "I never—"

"Shut your face," said Crispin. "Go on, Nell. When he seized you . . ."

"I never seized her," cried Herrick. "I—I hadn't time. Your butler—"

"You see," said Eleanor, "we arrived

together to-night. I was just going to ring when he said that I looked like a fairy-tale. Well, that was all right, so, instead of ringing, I gave him a baby stare."

"Oh, the hussy!" raved Herrick. "The—"

"Be quiet," shrieked his host and hostess.

"The next minute," said Eleanor coolly, "it was all over. And, when I came to, the door was open and I was in his arms."

"Oh, she's slurred it," said Crispin. "She's slurred it. What was all over?"

Eleanor smiled bewitchingly.

"You must ask your butler," she said.

Crispin lifted his glass and looked at his wife.

"My sweet," he said, "your very good health. There's no one like you in all the blinkin' world." His guests cried their approval, and the tenderest look stole into Madge Willoughby's eyes. He drank, smiled and set down his glass. Then he turned to Miss Cloke. "Nell," he said, "you're a darling. I'd rather have you on my right than any woman I know. Yet, sweet as you are, you're a fortunate child. David may be peculiar, but he'll never let you down."

"What d'you mean—'peculiar'? " said Herrick.

"That," said Eleanor, "is what I'm burning to know."

"Oh, it's nothing to worry about. Be careful of him when he's in beer, and if ever he says he's a life-belt and tries to put himself on, don't argue, but send for the police."

"They say," said Eleanor, gurgling, "that marriage tends to shatter all sorts of illusions."

Crispin laid a hand upon his heart.

"My dear," he declared, "I'm sure that yours will but substantiate your dreams."

"With which," said Madge tremulously, "we grey-beards looks towards you."

Solemnly she and her husband toasted their guests.

Herrick cleared his throat.

"Nell," he said, "I give you the verb 'to love.' *Je t'aime, tu m'aimes, il s'aime, mais nous aimons Madge tous les trois.*"

He raised his glass.

"*Il s'aime?*" said Crispin. "Put down that port."

"We'd better include him," said Eleanor. "Besides, he's—he's rather a dear."

She blew her host a kiss, and the toast was honoured.

"A little more of this," said Mrs. Wiloughby, "and I shall break down."

"I—I'm sure I should have seized her," said Crispin brokenly.

"Well, now," said Herrick, squeezing the end of a cigar, "what's the first thing to do?"

"Broadcast your folly," said Crispin. "Put a notice in *The Times*, announcing her unaccountable determination to become your wife. If I were you I should kill two birds with one rock and add that you won't be responsible for her debts. You never know."

"The next thing," said Madge, "is to decide roughly upon a date. Let's see. This is March. What about some time in May?"

"That's all right for me," said Eleanor. "As at present arranged, I get back from Nice——"

"My dear good child," said her hostess, "you can wash Nice out. You've got to get your *trousseau*."

The lovers regarded one another.

"Can't she get that at Nice?" said David. "I mean, I'd thought I'd go too. Give the east winds a miss an' play a little pat-ball an'——"

"Nice?" said Crispin. "You won't have time to get to Worthing and back. You haven't the remotest idea of what you're up against. As a rule, a full-dress wedding takes over two months to produce, and that means going full blast the whole of the time."

Herrick shifted uneasily:

"Must, er, must it be full-dress?" he ventured. "I mean——"

A shriek from Madge and Eleanor cut short the protest.

"But, of course," cried his hostess. "You must be married at St. Margaret's, with six bridesmaids."

"That's right," said Crispin. "And flowers on the organ. I'll order the confetti. The best way is to get it by the hundred-weight."

Herrick tugged his moustache.

"You're sure," he said humbly, "you're sure, Nell, you wouldn't like quite a quiet show? You know. Sort of hidin' our light under a bushel."

"Positive, darling," said Eleanor. "I want to splurge. Besides, we can go to Nice any old time. Can we have a guard of honour?"

"There you are," said Crispin. "They're squabbling already."

"Look here," said Madge, laughing. "Within limits of reason each of you's anxious to do what the other wants. Am I right?"

"My heart's desire," said David piously. "Liar," said Eleanor. "Go on, Madge."

"Very well. I've got a plan. Certain things, like her *trousseau*, are left to the woman, and certain other things are always left to the man. Now, that's a bad arrangement, because the woman gets what she wants and the man pleases himself."

"Why's that bad?" said Eleanor suspiciously.

"Because, if they're to be happy, the woman should get what he wants, while the man should please her."

Finger to exquisite lip, Eleanor regarded her swain.

"Yes, I've got that," said the latter. "It's rather subtle, but——"

"It's love," said Madge. "That's all. If Nell gets a frock and you don't like it, she'll loathe the sight of it."

"That's right," said Crispin. "And if you get a pair of boots and they frighten her, the very thought of the swine'll make your gorge rise."

"Therefore," continued Madge, bubbling, "the usual practice must be reversed. The things that a man does will become Nell's business, while David must choose and manage what's usually left to the girl."

There was a pregnant silence.

Then—

"My dear," said her husband, "I take my hat right off. What a truly tidal brain-wave. David, we'll go and look at camisoles to-morrow morning."

"No, you won't," said Madge. "But we shall—David and I. And you and Nell will go and get David some boots."

"But I don't want any boots," cried David. "Besides——"

"What d'you mean?" said Crispin. "You can't be married in your socks. To-morrow morning Nell and I are going down the Edgware Road to choose your wedding foot-joy—a good-looking pair of roomy, elastic-sided, banana-coloured boots; and if we should see a nice pair of trousers. . . ."

The rest of the sentence was lost in a roar of laughter.

When order had been restored—

"They must each," said Madge shakily, "make a list of what they need and where they'd like the things got. Who's your bootmaker, David?"

"Stoop."

"Very well. Nell and Crispin'll go to Stoop, and Nell'll order some boots. Stoop's got your last, and Crispin, being a man, will keep her straight. In the same way, you and I'll go to Zyrot's and you shall pick out some hats. They can be tried on me, and I'll supervise your choice."

"That's all very well," said David, "but I know Crispin's ideas of humour, and——"

"I give you my word," said his host, "I'll do you a treat. Nell shan't get a blinkin' thing I wouldn't be glad of myself. It'll be for her, of course, to choose the engagement ring." He turned to Eleanor. "Oh, you shall have a snorter." The unfortunate Herrick blenched. "I think, perhaps, you'd better have two—just in case you lose one."

Madge Willoughby began to shake with laughter.

"If she does," blurted David, "she'll have all grey flannel *lingerie*—with brass buttons."

"Oh, I'm sure you wouldn't do that," said Eleanor. "That would be unkind. Besides, a sponge-bag kilt wouldn't suit you."

So soon as he could speak—

"It's all off," cried David wildly. "I absolutely refuse to agree to this lop-sided idea. I won't have anything to do with it. Her—her imagination's too vivid. And with that overfed serpent to egg her on. . . ."

It was fully two minutes before his protest was overcome.

"As for the jobs," said Madge tearfully, "that they usually do together, we can be a Court of Appeal. Take the wedding, for instance. Well, I think it should be full-dress—not because Nell wants it, but because it's only decent."

"I agree," said Crispin warmly. "I've been through the hoop; why shouldn't David?"

Herrick raised his eyes to heaven and set his teeth.

"Madge," he said weakly, "why did you marry the brute?"

His hostess rose with a laugh.

"Love," she said. "He wanted me to, you see, and I wanted to do as he wanted."

\* \* \* \* \*

The absurd arrangement worked well.

The Willoughbys' taste was irreproachable.

Madge had learned how to dress in Boston, Mass., and possessed an uncanny instinct

for anticipating *les modes*. Crispin's sartorial opinions were respected in Savile Row. He had, moreover, a genius for organisation. Under his direction the 'production' of the wedding proceeded like clockwork. An eye to colour made Madge a born decorator, and, where furniture was concerned, while they were yet herded in the showrooms, she could tell the sheep from the goats. David's half-timbered cottage at Hammercloth Down began to look as it had looked when James the First was young.

Herrick and Eleanor Cloke were admirably served.

As for their patrons, they were tickled to death. Whether sitting as a Court of Appeal or supervising the lovers' selection of the wherewithal to take the matrimonial field, they called an hilarious tune. Born with large ideas, they indulged them generously. Happily for their *protégés*, the latter were rich. . . .

If Crispin and Madge made the running, David and Eleanor were well up. An afternoon at the dressmaker's suited Madge down to the ground, but the lady herself made such a dazzling mannequin that David would not have been human if he had found the hours long. In the same way, Crispin shouldered his burdens with the most infectious good-humour, continually reducing Miss Cloke to a condition of mirth which verged upon abandon and throwing shop after shop into sniggering confusion. The climax was reached at the hosier's, when Willoughby suddenly found himself unable to speak anything but the most imperfect English, enthusiastically supported by an excited flow of French. Indeed, but for his solemn promise never to repeat such simulation, their pilgrimages would have ended that day, for, as Eleanor observed that evening—

"The laws that seem to govern men's clothes are difficult enough without any international complications."

Herrick inspired audibly.

"That's a good one," he said. "I suppose the laws (sic) that govern women's clothes (sic) require rather less intelligence than does the sucking of eggs. Of course, my office is a complete sinecure. I'm not dressing you at all. Apparently I'm not—not competent. A woman's headgear alone seems to be a life study. If I make the most patent suggestion, all the women in the place nearly burst themselves with laughter; and when I ask why, the only

answer I get is that I 'shouldn't like it like that.' And sometimes Madge adds that 'the line 'ld be wrong.' And when I ask 'What line?' she says 'The line of the hat.' Not 'lining,' mark you, but 'line.'"

"Well, I expect it would."

Herrick put a hand to his head.

"*Et tu, Brute,*" he murmured. Then, "Look here. Supposing I was an architect, and you wanted to choose a house. And every one you liked I said 'You can't have that because the point's wrong.' And when you said 'What point?' I said 'The point of the house.' Well, after about thirty, you'd want to lie down and scream."

"Your wretched things," wailed Eleanor, "are every bit as bad. Yesterday I chose a grey suit—at least, I chose the cloth. And I said I'd bring them the buttons. As it happened, I'd seen some that morning—blue pebble buttons——"

"Good——"

"Exactly," said Eleanor. "That was what Crispin said. And when I asked the cause of the excitement, I was told that I 'didn't understand.' I ask you."

"At least," said Herrick faintly, "we don't change our rubric once a year."

"Once a month," corrected Willoughby. "You wait. How many hats did you get to-day?"

"Three," said David. "One's a topper—all blue and white straw. Looks as if someone had rolled on it and then bought it half a pint of gooseberries to keep it quiet."

"What?" screamed Eleanor.

"It's all right, darling," cried Madge. "It's a dream. They're not gooseberries at all. They're cherries—blue cherries, and the shape's rather like one—I wonder if you remember; I wore it at Henley last year, and it had a crushed strawberry——"

"Time," said Crispin. "Maudlin memories of discarded headgear are bad for my heart. I only introduced this ghastly topic to illustrate the fugacity of women's raiment. The hats you chose to-day will be out of date before they're married."

"I don't think so," said Madge. "I'm trying to buy well ahead. Of course——"

"One moment," said David. "D'you mean to say that there's even a possibility of such a thing?"

"Well, I'm a little bit anxious about that velvet toque. You see——"

A howl of dismay interrupted her.

"My favourite?" cried David. "The

wicked one that dips over the left eye?" He threw up his hands. "Why, properly cared for, there's years of wear in that hat."

"Years of wear?" shrieked the girls.

"Years," yelled Herrick. "An' then it could be done up."

There was a roar of laughter.

"You see?" said Crispin. "He hasn't the remotest idea. Never mind. Tomorrow Nell and I are looking at furnished flats."

Eleanor made a little mouth.

"Much," she announced, "against my will. A house would have been much nicer. Still, I accept your ruling."

"My dear," purred Madge, "I know what servants are. You're sure to strike some wash-outs in your first twelve months—real old soldiers, I mean. They're like vultures. They can smell a newly married couple five miles off. And a house is so unwieldy."

"I know, but——"

David put in his oar.

"Give me an undress wedding, and you shall have your house."

"Not on your life," said Eleanor. "Besides, if you really loved me you'd do as I want."

"Ugh," said David, "she's wheedling me." He cleared his throat. "Nothing doing," he said sternly. "Besides, if you worshipped me, you'd—you'd hang upon my lips."

"I think," said Eleanor demurely, "I think I—I might . . . in a house."

"I'll back the lady," shouted Crispin. "I'll lay five to one—six—ten . . . ten sovereigns to one sovereign the lady gets her way."

"Taken," said Madge. "David, stick to your guns. The Court of Appeal's behind you. Besides, I've had some. If you take a house before you've got the right servants you'll be buying trouble in red."

Eleanor gave her *fiancé* a melting look.

"David darling," she murmured, "don't you think that this once we could upset the Court of Appeal? After all, we've got to live in it—you . . . and I."

She blushed exquisitely.

Herrick writhed.

"Be strong," shrieked Madge, "be strong. Think of the housemaids saying they can't stick the stairs and the cook complaining of the damp and the charwomen——"

"Ch-charwomen?" stammered David.

"Charwomen. Relays of them—when all

the servants have gone. And the silver at the Bank because you've no one to clean it, and poor Nell in tears counting your shirts,

David addressed himself to Eleanor.  
"My sweet," he said, "not even for an undress wedding will I give you a house. In your own interest——"

Here a salted almond hit him upon the nose.

Mrs. Willoughby regarded the ceiling.

"Ten sovereigns to one," she murmured. "Dear me, this is very fortunate. David, how much was that hat you didn't like?"

"What, not 'The Lost Chord'?"

"That's right."

"Nine and a half guineas," said Herrick. He turned to Crispin. "Nine and a half guineas for a piece of rope—wound round and round—painted red and white—with a chunk of wood on each end."

"But how ravishing," said Crispin. "Was it real rope, or only imitation?"

"It was a gem," said Madge. "We'll get it to-morrow, David, before we look at the cooks."

The conference was typical and one of several.

The four fled the time pleasantly, hunting in couples, conferring perhaps twice a week. Once Madge had protested that the arrangement was false, that her jest was being carried too far. The betrothal, she hinted, was being shorn of its rights; the privacy of courtship was being invaded; halcyon days were being stolen away. Her objection was tumultuously quashed. With one consent Eleanor and David insisted that all was well. They declared that they were not children, that chances of present discord were being eliminated, that future harmony was being assured. They also expressed their gratitude in certain terms.

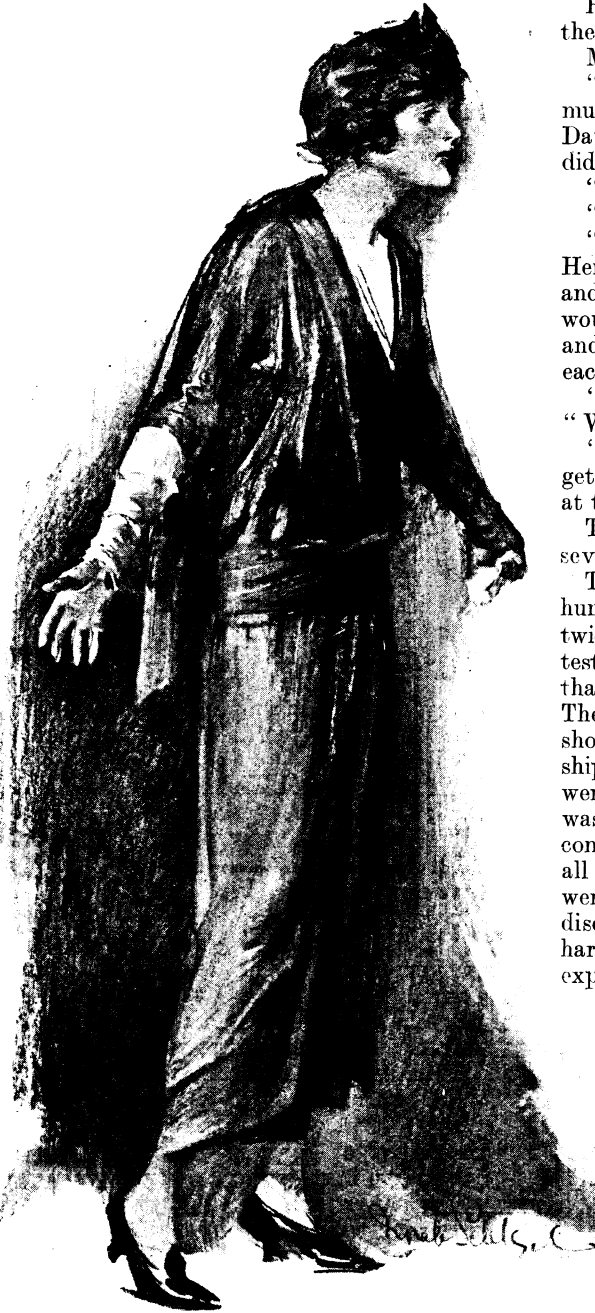
Madge was reassured. Crispin, being a man, said and thought nothing at all. And, as is always the way, some people, who were not concerned, said and looked volumes.

This was inevitable.

The engagement had attracted attention to a notable pair.

Miss Cloke had been bridesmaid to

Royalty, was immensely liked and of great beauty. Herrick had played polo



"'Crip, the most awful thing has happened.'"

and answering the back-door yourself. . . .  
At least, a flat has only one door."



for England, and was known and respected on the Turf. His beautiful filly, Cretonne, was fancied for the Derby. Her victory would undoubtedly be cordially received.

As for the Willoughbys, they were celebrities pure and simple. They had been conspicuous as man and maid. Captain Willoughby, bachelor, was a V.C. Miss Madge Dinwiddy had been the darling of New York. The two had married for love and nothing else. Two personalities—one brilliant and the other steadfast—had made two simultaneous mutual appeals, each of them too powerful to be withstood. Before the respective onslaughts Crispin Willoughby and Madge had gone down incontinently.

Mayfair had roared its approval then and there, and its approval had never waned.

So far as the two were concerned, the result of their union was natural enough. Each began to assume something of the other's outstanding quality. A sheen stole upon the nap of Crispin's steadfastness. The charm of Madge's brilliance began to crystallise.

American by birth, the lady would have graced any company. She was tall and beautifully made. Some said her neck was too long, but I do not think so. Be that as it may, it was the neck of a goddess. The Willoughby emeralds had never looked half so well. Soft brown hair and laughing eyes, a fine colour and an exquisite mouth went to the making of a countenance you never forgot. Her air, her easy dignity.

her flow of excellent talk—above all, that precious radiance which could coax flame from smoking flax would have ennobled a hunchback. Wherever she went, Madge Willoughby was constantly aerating the wine of life. Often enough she turned it into champagne.

Crispin was thirty-five and a handsome man. Tall, quiet, pleasant, grave-faced, he suggested a strength and depth of character not to be met every day. The suggestion was true. The deeper you dug, the finer the ore you came to. But, until his marriage, the mine had to be worked. His style, his manners were perfect—and always had been; he inspired astounding confidence. But he had been reserved—shy. Only among his familiars would he let himself go. . . . Five years with Madge had altered everything. The man had shed his reserve and given his spirits their head. His humour came bubbling. Invariably he led the dance.

And Madge watched him leading with the gentlest light in her eyes. . . .

The opposition of two such fair planets, no less than their several conjunction with stars almost as bright, was bound to excite remark.



“‘Impossible,’ said Crispin calmly. . . . ‘Of course, the way to see you is to sit at your feet.’”



Eyebrows were raised; whispers were repeated; nudges were covertly exchanged. Soon an impatient confidence that smoke so thick must be the greasy harbinger of conflagration set tongues wagging.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was on the evening of the nineteenth of April, as Mrs. Willoughby and Herrick were returning by taxi from choosing a breakfast set, that the latter threw his cigarette out of the window, took the lady in his arms and kissed her upon the mouth.

"David!"

She shook him off and shrank into her corner, trembling violently.

Herrick took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. This was unnaturally pale.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I beg your pardon. I—I don't know why I did it. I think—I think it was your perfume. I shall smell it all my life, dear . . . your faint perfume."

"David!"

The horror of the girl's tone was reflected in her beautiful eyes.

The man nodded.

"Yes, it's true," he said. "I've fallen in love with you."

"Oh, David . . ."

She began to wail tremulously, twisting her fingers as though in an agony of mind.

"I'm only human, Madge; and if you could see yourself I think you'd understand. I've tried, dear. I know all it means. I've tried and fought and jammed my nose to the stone. But it's not the slightest good."

"But Nell," cried Madge. "Nell . . ."

Herrick shrugged his shoulders.

"I know. It can't be helped. I'm sorry. She's awfully sweet. But—Oh, Madge, there's something about you that takes a man by the throat . . . something that—"

"Stop, David, stop! You must be out of your mind. You can't mean—Oh, for God's sake tell me you're only pulling my leg."

"I wish to God I could," said Herrick miserably. "But I can't, my lady, I can't. I love you, and there you are." Madge caught her breath and clapped her hands to her face. "I'm wild—crazy about you, and that's the truth. Of course, it's hopeless—grotesque. You're Crispin's wife, and Crispin's one of the best. But I don't suppose I'm the first that's loved his wife. . . . You'll tell him, of course. And say if he wants to kick me, I won't try and cramp his style. He's every right in the

world. But I don't think he will, because he'll understand. He's a man, you see . . . and he knows that it's pretty easy to fall in love with you."

"But Nell, David, Nell. . . . Don't you see what this means to her? You're letting her down most frightfully. Why, man, it'll break her heart. If it wasn't for Nell, I wouldn't care a kick. We'd have a straight talk, and after a month—"

"Month?" echoed David, with a bitter laugh. "Shows how much you understand. 'After a month.' . . . Good God, Madge, this isn't an evening out. I'm finished . . . bent . . . broken. . . . You've shown me the precious fountain. I've drunk its water out of your blessed palms. I've drunk—*drunk*, my lady. . . . And you only drink once. I'm badged—branded, Madge, branded as your man. With me you stand for womanhood. Your smile, your voice, your hair, the light in your wonderful eyes—"

"Oh, stop, stop," wailed Madge. "How can you talk like this? You know it's not the game. You know you're wronging Nell . . . and Crispin . . . and me. If I've given you cause, God knows I never meant it. If . . ."

Her voice broke, and she began to weep silently.

Herrick set his teeth.

"We're nearly home," he said. "Shall I tell him to drive round the Park?"

"Yes—no—yes," sobbed Mrs. Willoughby. "And please don't talk any more."

David gave the order and flung himself back in his seat. Presently with a shaking hand he lighted a cigarette. . . .

By the time they were back at Park Place Madge was reasonably composed.

She descended quickly, waved her hand, and let herself in with a rush.

Herrick told the cabman to go to the Club.

Crispin was in the library, seated upon the floor, with a pipe between his teeth, brushing the Sealyham.

His wife burst in tempestuously.

"Crip, the most awful thing has happened."

"Impossible," said Crispin calmly. "My word, how lovely you look. Of course, the way to see you is to sit at your feet."

His wife sat down by his side and put an arm round his neck.

"Crip," she said, laying her cheek against his, "David's gone off the deep end."

"What?" cried Crispin. "Gone and got sozzled by day?"

"No, no, no. Far worse, Crip. He thinks he's in love with me."

"The devil he does," said Crispin. "Not that it isn't natural, but what a stew and a half! Where's Nell come in?"

"He swears she doesn't," cried Madge. "That's the frightful part. Whatever are we to do?"

Her husband knitted his brows.

"Of course, he'll get over it," he murmured. "That's certain enough. Just as the others have. But in this case we're up against time."

"Exactly," said Madge. "Right up against it. A week in the country might help, but he can't have a couple of days. Whatever happens, Nell must never suspect."

"By Jove, no." He turned and looked at his wife. "Hullo, you've been crying, sweetheart." His lips tightened. "Did he—make a fool of himself?"

"Only for a second. He caught hold of me and kissed me. But I didn't mind that. Besides, he apologised directly. And he told me to tell you that if you wanted to kick him he was at your service." Crispin grinned. "But he said he didn't think you would."

"Why?"

"He said that, being a man, you'd understand."

"Ah."

There was a moment's silence.

Then Crispin kissed his wife, smiled into her eyes and fell again to brushing the terrier, who was patiently lying on his back with his legs in the air.

"Where is, er, Paris, at the moment?" he demanded lazily.

"I haven't the faintest idea. Probably at the Club."

"And Cœnone?"

"Probably at home. Why?"

"I was thinking they'd better not meet till David's got his orders. Of course, the marriage must go through. They're perfectly matched and they'll be ridiculously happy. If there were anything doing—I mean, if you were on, it 'ld be a different thing. Nell wouldn't stand an earthly—no woman would." Mrs. Willoughby squeezed his arm. "But as you're not, old lady—well, unrequited love doesn't wear as well as it did when 'burning Sappho loved and sung.' Personally, I'm not at all sure that it was ever very durable. But that's beside the point, which is that our job is to knock it out quick."

"I agree," said Madge, abstracting her husband's case and taking a cigarette. "But how on earth can we do it?"

"Ask him to dinner to-night. I'll go out. Somewhere about the fish tell him tenderly that you wouldn't be seen dead with him. That'll put him off and, what's far more important, wound his pride. Add, for instance, that you don't like the way he eats." Madge began to shake with laughter. "And say, 'to be perfectly frank,' that you've always been much surprised that Nell didn't seem to mind."

"I can't, Crip. Besides——"

"You must. It's the only way. Then, having got so far, say, 'as a matter of fact,' you're not at all sure that she hasn't noticed something. That'll make him sit up. It'll also make him ask questions. You'll beat about the bush till you get to the sweet. Then say you'll tell him when the servants are gone."

"Go on," said Madge, bubbling.

"When you're alone, extract his word to say nothing, and then tell him bluntly we've a sort of idea that she's looking at somebody else. Refuse to say who it is—that shouldn't be difficult—but say he's a pretty strong man. Add casually that of course it isn't everyone that could hold a girl like Nell and that, 'to tell the truth,' you and I'd always said that the one thing we were afraid of was that he wouldn't be strong enough to hold her affection."

"Yes, yes"—excitedly.

"Well, that's all. He'll snort and blow a bit. He may even grind his teeth. But if you do it well, you'll bring it off. First you wound his pride and then you slap its face. No matter what he says, I'll bet he leaves this house mentally swearing he'll show us whether he can hold Nell. . . . As for his loving you, sweetheart, you'll have blotted that frenzy out."

For a moment his wife looked thoughtful. Then she got upon her feet.

"Crip," she said, gently smoothing his hair, "you've got a lightning brain."

"I've got a peach of a wife," said Crispin Willoughby. He smacked the Sealyham's flank. "Haven't I, Boodle?"

The terrier sneezed his assent.

Husband and wife laughed.

Then—

"I'd better telephone now," said Mrs. Willoughby. "There's only one thing you haven't thought of, Crip. Obviously David and I can't continue our raids. How's

that to be explained? Nell will want to know why."

Crispin removed his pipe and regarded its bowl.

"I know," he said. "We'll say Aunt Millicent's ill and burst off to Como at once. A couple of weeks in Italy 'll suit me down to the ground."

"And me," said Madge. "Give me the home of romance."

"But not its occupant?"

"No—unless she can show a good title." Husband and wife smiled.

Arrived at the door, Madge paused.

"I suppose you must go out," she said wistfully.

"I must, my darling. This is a one man show. Besides, I think my job is to get hold of Nell. You don't want her blowing in to spoke your wheel."

"My word, no," said Mrs. Willoughby.

"I'll say you're tired and take her to see the play."

"Right."

The door closed.

For a moment or two Crispin continued to brush the Sealyham. Then he rose to his feet and picked up the letter on which he had been sitting. He re-read it carefully.

*You ask me why I never turned up this morning. I can see no earthly reason why you shouldn't know. Convention has offered me fifty, but they're none of them sound. If either of us was a fool, if the understanding which you and Madge share was less perfect, finally, if you were almost any sort of man but the sort of man you are, it would be different. As it is . . .*

*Crispin, my dear, you can add a scalp to your belt. I don't suppose for a second that you even know you've got a belt; but you have, and—it's pretty full. Any way, mine's the latest. . . . And that's the inconvenient truth.*

*As for David, I'm dreadfully sorry, because he's one of the best. I'm afraid he's silly enough to worship me, and now I'm letting him down. Heavens, how I'm tearing things up! But there you are. . . .*

*You need have no fear. I don't propose to assault you by word or deed. I'm not going to throw my arms round your neck or tell you I love you better than anything on earth. BUT MY IMPULSE IS TO DO BOTH. So now you see, dear, why I never turned up this morning.*

Nell.

\* \* \* \* \*

The royal box at the Imperial was available. So, incidentally, were more than

half the stalls. The occasion, however, was demanding privacy.

So soon as the curtain rose, Crispin opened the door and ushered Eleanor into the withdrawing-room.

"Crispin, why have you done this? You know what I said."

Standing still by the table, the girl made a pathetically beautiful picture. Her simple white frock, her short hair, her little folded hands, her high colour, the piteous droop of her lips—above all, the tense dog-like devotion of her big brown eyes lent her the air of a child that has pleaded guilty and come to judgment.

Willoughby steeled his heart.

"One can say things," he said, "which it isn't easy to write. Sit down, Nell."

He flung himself into a chair and crossed his legs. Then he took out a cigar and lighted it carefully.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "your letter was rather a godsend."

Miss Cloke started.

"A—a godsend?" she stammered.

"A godsend," said Crispin comfortably. "But let that pass. I'll tell you why presently. To tell you the truth, I was always a little afraid of something like this." Eleanor opened her mouth, shut it, hesitated and then sat down. "I couldn't very well say so, but when Madge first suggested that we should hunt in pairs I thought it was playing with fire. You see, as you hint in your letter, I—well, I've had some, Nell. It's a difficult thing to say, but . . ."

The sentence slid into an apologetic snigger.

"You're rather—rather popular?" said Eleanor, using an odd, strained tone.

"Exactly. Heaven knows why, but you wouldn't believe the number of, er, applications I've had in the last five years."

Eleanor's eyes flashed.

"What fools women are," she said.

"And men," said Crispin, with a generous air. "And men—often enough. In the present case, I wasn't afraid for myself because, though you're awfully attractive, Nell, I'm—I'm funny like that." He laughed self-consciously, uncrossing and recrossing his legs. "You know, I've got one simply appalling fault."

"One—yes?"

"Well, I'm frightfully critical—particular."

There was a frozen silence. Then—

"Where," said Eleanor in a choking voice, 'where do I fall short?'"

Crispin shifted uneasily.

"Don't let's go into details," he said. "It'll only——"

"Please."

"My dear Nell, you are so attractive and you've got so many——"

"That'll do," said Eleanor Cloke. "And now please tell me exactly where I fail."

Crispin hesitated. Then—

"Perhaps it's as well," he muttered "You see . . . . Nell, my dear, it's your walk."

"My *what*?" shrieked Eleanor.

"Your walk—carriage, my dear. In repose you're immense. Standing by the table just now, you were simply it. But when you move—I don't know what it is, but you, er, you don't do yourself justice. You're inclined to . . . to . . ."

"Waddle?" said Eleanor mercilessly.

"Not exactly waddle, but. . . . Well, perhaps you would call it 'waddling.' But it's nothing to write home about. The trouble is I'm afraid it's occurred to David."

"What has? My wal—waddle?"

"Your walk. I may be wrong, but. . . . Nell, it's your only blemish, but, as it happens, the one thing David's noticed ever since I've known him was the way a woman walked. When you two said you were engaged, you could have knocked me down. But apparently——"

"He happens," said Eleanor icily, "to have affirmed on more than one occasion that I had the bearing of a queen."

Crispin shrugged his shoulders.

"Love is blind," he said shortly. "But of course I may be wrong. Still, if it isn't that, I don't know what it is. If you wash that out, you're practically flawless," and with that he leaned back, thrust his cigar between his lips and smoked luxuriously.

"What do you mean," said Eleanor "—if it isn't that?'"

Crispin started. Then he rose to his feet and began to pace the room nervously.

Eleanor Cloke watched him with smouldering eyes.

After two or three turns he stopped in front of her chair.

"I said your note was a godsend. Well, so in a way it is. Nell, if you value your happiness, you'd better give David up."

The girl stared.

"Thanks very much—why? Are you afraid my waddle will get on his nerves?"

"I'm afraid," said Crispin, "it has." Eleanor smothered an exclamation. "At least, if it hasn't," he added, "then something else has. Nell, I'm grieved to tell you, but he's looking elsewhere."

"Who to?"

Crispin shook his head.

"I've not the faintest idea. But I'm pretty sure he's cooling. Now he's not the man to cool off unless somewhere around there's another brighter fire. Of course, we—I may be wrong."

"Madge thinks so?"

Crispin threw away his cigar, picked up a chair and sat himself down with the table between himself and Eleanor Cloke.

"Look here," he said. "If you want to be happy, Nell, you'll take my advice. *Back out before it's too late.* If you and he marry, you're done. Madge and I've always been afraid that you wouldn't be able to hold him. Well, it looks as though we were right. . . . You're awfully sweet, Nell, and David's one of the best. He'd never go looking for trouble—he's not that sort. But he's an attractive man, and there are plenty of girls. Only a strong personality—a charm that fills up his life—will ever hold David Herrick."

"I see," said Eleanor slowly, nodding her head. "And my charm's not strong enough?"

"I'm frightfully sorry, Nell, but I'm afraid it isn't. The mercy is that you haven't burned your boats."

There was a long silence.

From behind the closed door a sudden swell of applause came to their ears, subduing for an instant the faint roar and jingle of the traffic, the toots of innumerable horns, and even the staccato clamour of a fire-engine's tongue. Then the demonstration died down, leaving the distant racket to snarl and grumble over the bone of silence as a beast frets jealously over the consumption of its prey.

At length—

"Well, I'm greatly obliged," said Miss Cloke, with a dry laugh. "It was a good thing I wrote, wasn't it?"

"It was Fate," said Crispin piously. "'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will.'"

"No doubt," said Eleanor. "Any way, you've opened my eyes—wide. . . . By the way, have you got my, er, application, or did you leave it on the piano?"

Crispin began to search his pockets.

"I had it," he murmured. "I remember

thinking when I was dressing 'I must not leave that about.'"

"Never mind," said Eleanor in a shaking voice. "I expect the servants have found it and thrown it away."

"Here it is," said Crispin triumphantly.

Eleanor snatched the letter and thrust it into her bag.

Then she rose to her feet.

"If you don't mind," she said, "I think I'll go. Don't let me take you away. I'm only sorry to have put you to so much expense."

"My dear," said Crispin, "the thought that I've opened your eyes makes it cheap at the price."

"It is obvious," said Eleanor, "that the great thing in life is to know oneself."

"That's the idea," cried Crispin, thumping the table with his fist. "You've got it in one, Nell. And it's never too late to begin."

Speechless with indignation, Miss Cloke regarded him.

Then she covered her face and began to shake with laughter. . . .

Crispin watched her open-mouthed.

At last she pulled herself together and passed to the door.

"Poor . . . old . . . Madge," she said deliberately.

Crispin swallowed.

"Oh, it's nothing," he said. "She's only rather tired."

"I'm not surprised," said Eleanor. "I think I should be—*rather tired* . . . after five years."

The next second she was gone.

Captain Willoughby took out a handkerchief and proceeded to mop his face. Then he stepped to a mirror and adjusted his tie.

"And they think they're acting," he muttered, jerking his head towards the box.

"Well, well—it's all in the day's work. . . ."

He fell to pulling his moustache. Suddenly he burst out laughing. "What a game Life is!" he cried. "I try to protect my own skin, and they give me the V.C.; I deliberately scrap my reputation to do a girl a good turn, and—and it costs me a jolly good friend and seven quid."

He lighted a cigarette and picked up his coat. "I wonder how Madge has got on," he continued musingly. "And perhaps it'd be as well if I had a look at the play. I can't reappear till it's over, and she might ask what it's about."

He hung up his coat, extinguished his cigarette, and entered the box.

\* \* \* \* \*

The wedding of David Herrick and Eleanor Cloke took place early in May and was a brilliant success.

The bride looked extraordinarily beautiful, and if the dignity of her gait was slightly affected, that was a fault upon the right side.

At the reception the bridegroom, who had eaten no lunch, ate nothing at all. I imagine he had decided that the occasion was one upon which no risks should be run.

Captain and Mrs. Willoughby were among the guests.

The tongues which had recently wagged fairly spouted the 'Amens,' and afterwards slobbered over the 'enchancing atmosphere of a true love-match.' Subduing a feeling of nausea, Madge and Crispin agreed enthusiastically.

The relations, however, between the Herricks and Willoughbys seemed to leave something to be desired. The old familiar affection seemed to have been superseded by a boisterous cordiality which was rather too hearty to be true.

These conditions prevailed until the month of July.

It was then for the first time that Mr. and Mrs. Herrick spent twenty-four hours apart. And that was against their will—they were really absurdly in love. But Eleanor had a cold, and Tattersall's Sale Ring may be a draughty place. . . .

For all that, Madge Willoughby was there, and she and David had an engaging talk—so engaging, in fact, that the mare which he had come to Newmarket to buy became the property of another at less than half the figure to which Herrick was prepared to go.

That same July morning Mrs. Herrick received a note.

*Nell dear,*

*I gave you back your letter because you asked for it, but to part with it went against the grain rather more than did anything else I had to do that night. You see, next to Madge, I love you rather better than anyone else, and I was so pleased to know that, next to David, you felt the same about me. Besides, to be strictly truthful, it was the only 'application' I'd ever had. . . . Still, perhaps it's as well.*

*One or two confessions you'll value.*

*First, before your delivery of the word 'waddle,' I almost broke down. I never could have believed that so much withering contempt could be compressed into so homely*

*a dissyllable. Secondly, I never missed one of your thrusts; they were superb. Finally, never to my dying day shall I know how, when first you were standing by the table, I resisted the temptation to take you in my arms. Before we got down to it, I mean. Nell, it—was—irresistible. . . . Yet I came through. Truly, 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.'*

*Crispin.*

As her husband came in that evening—  
“Well, my darling,” cried Eleanor,  
“what d’you know?”

“Little enough, old lady. I lost the mare, but Madge and Crispin were there, and they helped me home. They want us to dine to-morrow. Will you be fit?”

Eleanor sat up in bed.

“I’d love to,” she said. “But d’you think we possibly can? I’ve put the Festivals off.”

“Good Heavens, yes. I mean, they’re practically relatives, aren’t they—Crispin and Madge?”

“Practically,” said Eleanor. “And much—much more intelligent.”

*Another complete story by Dornford Yates will appear in the next number.*



## A PENSIONER.

**Y**OU’LL meet him at the barber’s, holding court,  
Alert and eighty, prodigal of words,  
The father of a suburb—dull resort,  
With city sparrows now its only birds.

He saw the windmill thrive on Old Town Brow;  
Where grides the tram he heard the wild bees hum.  
He wooed long since in Lovers’ Lane, where now  
A modish square has withered to a slum.

His speech preserves its pleasant formal grace,  
His step its spring, his mind its rustic trend.  
He knows the latest whisper of the place:  
He is a hive of gossip—and my friend.

ERIC CHILMAN.



## THE CLOUDLESS NIGHT

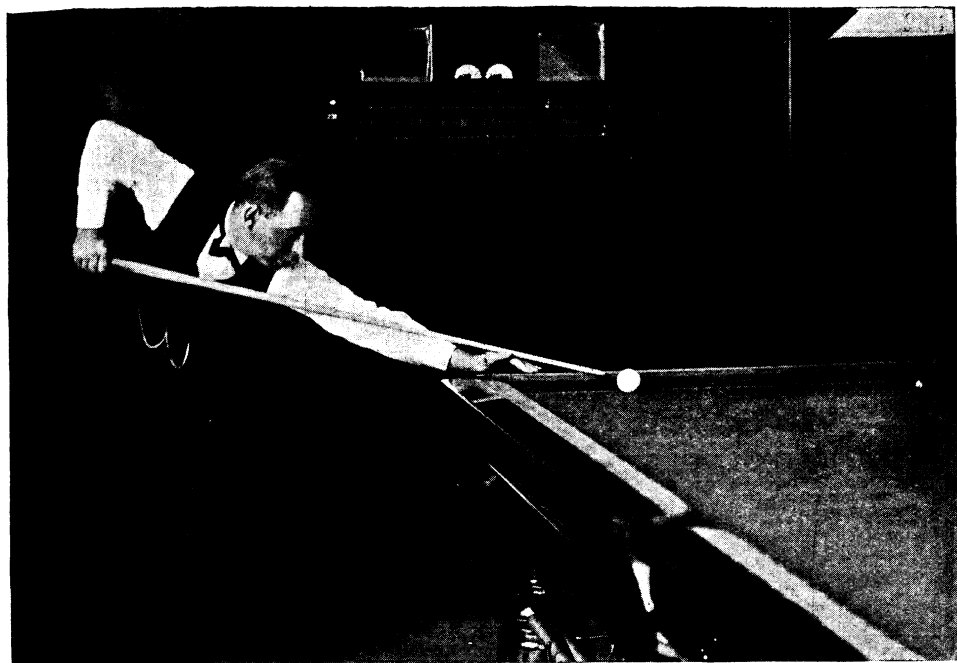
VOID is the span of rain-washed air  
Save only for the abundant stars,  
As though an Arab cohort there  
Rode over a wide plain and bare,  
Bright spears and scimitars.

And now a restive stallion kicks  
The road to sparkles, and the train  
Runs from his hoof; a filly flicks  
A silver fly; a rider clicks  
His silver bridle-chain.

Or Night's a forest camp, and there  
The lanterns hang from bole to bole,  
And cressets gleam, but cannot scare  
The silver moths drawn on to dare  
The moon's great aureole.

So Night's a forest or a plain  
As fancy wills, and you behold  
Moths without number or a train  
Of Arab horse for Charles's Wain  
With axle-pins of gold.

WILFRID THORLEY.



*Photo by]*

*[Victor Hey, Scarborough.*

#### A FASCINATING STROKE.

*In this photograph I am shown playing the stroke illustrated in Diagram 2. The problem is to play in off the red in the facing top pocket slowly enough to leave the red in good position over the middle pocket. To do this, cram as much left-hand side on the cue ball as possible; at the same time raise the butt of the cue and make the stroke with a slight downward thrust.*

# WONDER STROKES IN BILLIARDS

By WILLIE SMITH

*Champion*

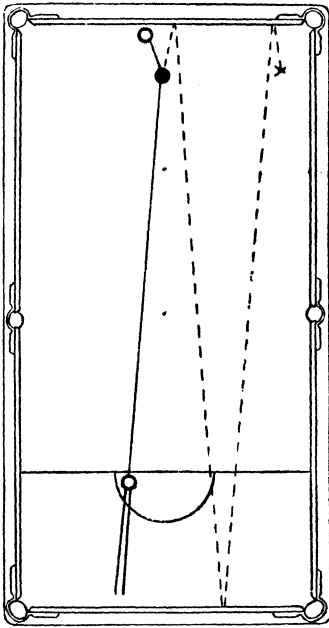
**I**N a winning sense, the most wonderful strokes are the ones you keep on getting. I want to make this clear to prevent anyone from concluding that big strokes are the secret of big billiards. They are not, but they are most useful when you want them, are these wonder strokes of the game.

My first stroke is by no means spectacular—it is one of the sort that are a lot better than they look to be. The lie of the balls is shown in Diagram 1. The red ball is on the billiard spot, the cue ball is in hand, the white ball can be tight against the top cushion or an inch or two away from it.

This is immaterial. What does matter is that the white must be so placed that a thin ball-to-ball cannon is not playable from red to white, the balls are too nearly covered for it.

Therefore I play the double-strength follow-through cannon shown in my diagram, hitting the red nearly full, without an atom of side on the cue ball. Positionally I play to bring the red ball in and out of baulk, leaving it as indicated by the continuous line in the diagram. This is a most difficult shot, demanding great freedom and accuracy of cueing—the cue has to be swung clean through the ball. It is noteworthy how far

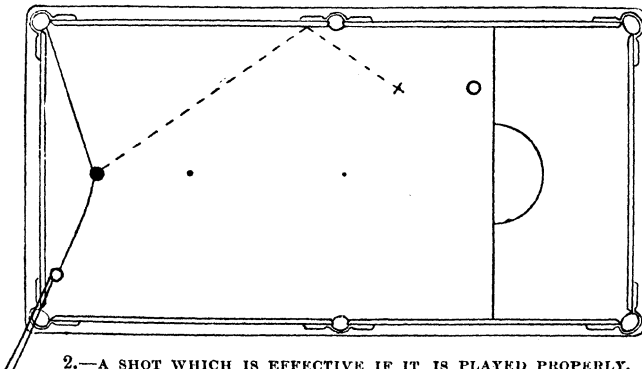




1.—MY FIRST STROKE: A DOUBLE-STRENGTH FOLLOW-THROUGH CANNON.

*The red ball is on the billiard spot, the cue ball is in hand, the white ball can be tight against the top cushion or an inch or two away from it. A thin ball-to-ball cannon is not playable from red to white. The red ball is hit hard and nearly full, with n/ side on the cue ball.*

contact is actually established. The direction of this swerve is as shown in my diagram; it is quite pronounced enough to be seen by anyone who is looking for it in actual play. This stroke is most useful to me, as the only alternative is an awkward forcing stroke, uncertain both as regards the score and after-position. If any of my readers feel inclined to try this fascinating stroke, the main thing they have to be careful about is to aim thickly enough at the red to allow for the swerve of the cue ball.



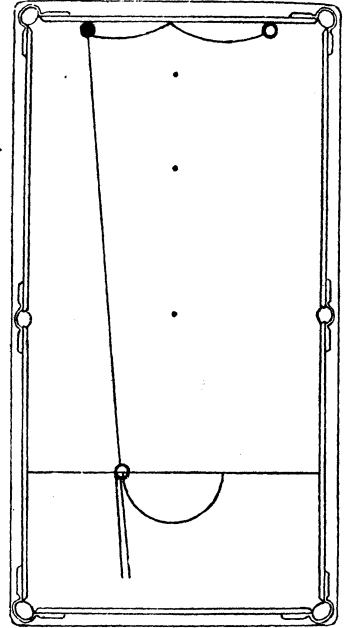
2.—A SHOT WHICH IS EFFECTIVE IF IT IS PLAYED PROPERLY.

*The red ball is on the billiard spot, the white ball is down the table, and the cue ball is nearly tight against the top cushion and 10 1/4 inches from the left-side cushion. The problem is to play in off the red in the facing top pocket slowly enough to leave the red in good position over the middle pocket. See photograph on p. 361.*

the cue swing extends when this beautiful stroke is made.

Diagram 2 illustrates a shot which is effective if it is played properly. The red ball is on the billiard spot, the white ball is down the table, and the cue ball is nearly tight against the top cushion and 10 1/4 inches from the left-side cushion. The problem is to play in off the red in the facing top pocket slowly enough to leave the red in good position over the middle pocket. To do this, I have to cram as much left-hand side on the cue ball as I can, at the same time raising the butt of my cue and making the stroke with a slight downward thrust as shown in my first photograph.

The outstanding thing about this stroke is that aim has to be taken on one point of the red ball in order to hit another. I aim to hit the red three-quarter thick, but the strong side and the downward cue action sets up such a swerve in the run of the cue ball that a half-ball



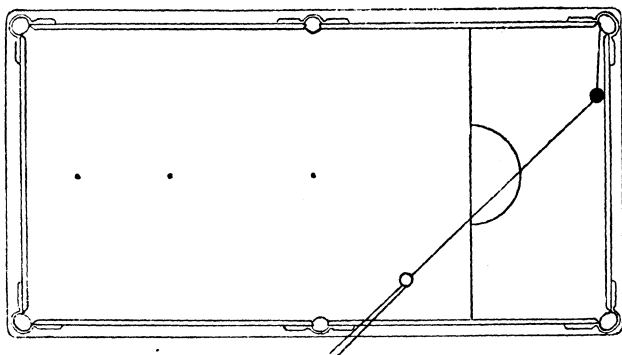
3.—A RICOCHET CANNON.

*The red ball is tight against the top cushion and 13 inches from the left-side cushion; the white is also tight against the top cushion and 13 inches from the right top pocket. To make this cannon I put very strong top and left-hand side on the cue ball and hit the ball very hard, striking the red about three-quarter thick.*

My third diagram shows a useful ricochet cannon, about the limit in this direction when playing from hand on an object ball tight against the top cushion. The red ball is tight against the top cushion and 13 inches from the left-side cushion; the white is also tight against the top cushion and 13 inches from the right top pocket. To make this cannon I put very strong top and left-hand side on the cue ball and hit the ball very hard, striking the red about three-quarter thick. Then the cue ball

comes away with the astonishing swerve depicted in the diagram, and bumps along the top cushion to make one of the most wonderful cannons the game of billiards can show. If you arrange the two balls nearer to each other, this stroke is a good deal easier, but to make it from the measurements I have given is a wonder shot indeed.

Diagram 4 shows an effective shot I have to play at times, but it is so difficult that I have no love for it, I assure you. The red ball is tight against the baulk cushion and 15 inches from the right-hand baulk pocket, the cue ball is 13 inches from the baulk line and 8 inches from the left-side cushion. It is important to note the exact position of the cue ball, as this is the very thing which makes the stroke so inordinately difficult. If this ball is moved a little nearer the baulk cushion and kept the same distance from the side cushion, any amateur who plays a fairly useful game could run through the red into the baulk pocket. But it is very different when the balls are as I have placed them; then the stroke calls for strong top and right-hand side and a full contact with the red with smashing strength,



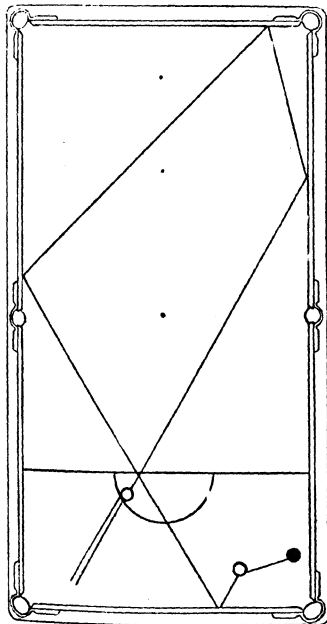
4.—A VERY DIFFICULT SHOT.

*The red ball is tight against the baulk cushion and 15 inches from the right-hand baulk pocket, the cue ball is 13 inches from the baulk line and 8 inches from the left-side cushion. This stroke calls for strong top and right-hand side and a full contact with the red with smashing strength.*

such power of cue that the red is almost thumped away from the cushion, while the strong top and side sends the cue ball spinning and bumping along the cushion into the pocket.

Diagram 5 shows a shot which looks difficult and is difficult, rather a rare combination, for there are plenty of shots which look as hard as can be, but are simple enough to a skilful cueman, while there are others, especially when position has to be gained, which appear very easy, but test the full power of a first-rate professional to handle to perfection. The shot to which I refer finds the cue ball in hand and the other two balls in baulk, as shown in the diagram, and the only stroke I have any chance of making is the all-round cannon shown in the diagram. To make this shot I play from the outer edge of the "D" and 6 inches behind the left-hand spot, using a little top and running side on the cue ball, and gauging the different cushions the ball has to hit before making the cannon. Whenever I play this stroke I hope for the best, but I cannot say more than that, for this particular double-baulk cannon, valuable as it is when it comes off, is no certainty for any man who ever held a cue.

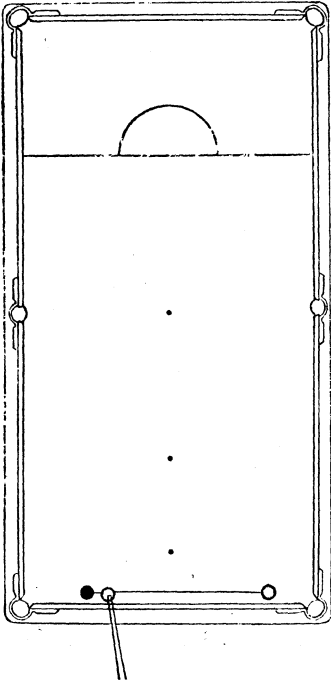
My second photo and Diagram 6 combine to illustrate a spectacular stroke. The red ball is nearly touching the top cushion, and the white ball is in line with the red, but the cue ball is not quite in line with the red, and *that's* the trouble. It is very nearly touching the red, too close for either a run-through or a screw-back to be playable, and a shade nearer the top cushion than the red ball is, and that is fairly close to the cushion. There is only one stroke worth playing for. This is the picque cannon played by raising the cue as shown in my photograph and coming down on the top of the cue ball slightly



5.—A DOUBLE-BAULK CANNON.

*The cue ball in hand and the other two balls in baulk, the only stroke possible being this all-round cannon. To make this shot I play from the outer edge of the "D" and 6 inches behind the left-hand spot, using a little top and running side on the cue ball, and gauging the different cushions the ball has to hit before making the cannon.*

behind the vertical centre of that ball. The stroke is not played with great force—it is almost a matter of “dropping” the cue correctly on the ball—for the weight of the cue falling on the ball will provide almost all the motive power required for the stroke. But the stroke calls for neat cuemanship—the least clumsiness means a foul. What I have to do is to impart just enough forward rotation to the cue ball to send it the mere fraction of an inch it must travel to hit the red; then back it comes like a flash, impelled by the strong backward rotation which is the main movement the cue ball carries, owing to the downward delivery of the cue. The result is the wonderful and very pretty cannon shown in our diagram; but if any reader feels inclined to practise it, I should advise him to do so on a friend’s table—the risk to the cloth is rather too great to practise strokes of this calibre on a table of your own.



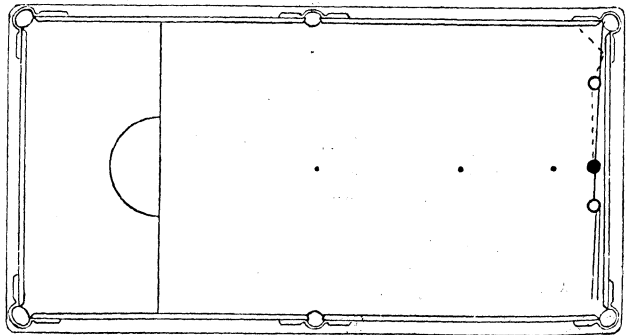
6.—THE PICQUE CANNON.

*This is played by raising the cue and dropping it on the top of the cue ball slightly behind the vertical centre of that ball. The photograph on the opposite page illustrates the cue position for this very pretty cannon.*

clear. Then the strong forward spin on the cue ball takes charge, and the ball runs along the cushion towards the pocket at a merry pace, and while it is running, the powerful right-hand side veers it towards the pocket and helps it in on its arrival.

It is really remarkable what can be done by powerful cueing with strong forward spin and side. Diagram 8 gives striking proof of this, and demonstrates a shot which I have not seen any other player exploit in serious billiards. The cue ball is in hand, the red is almost anywhere within a couple of inches or so of the top pocket, but it must be so placed that it can be smashed into that pocket by a fullish ball-to-ball contact. From the position it is obviously essential to put the red into the top pocket in such a way that the cue ball is left in position near the top cushion for a cross-loser off the spotted red. If this is done, the path to the open

My seventh diagram shows what I call a “clear-the-way” stroke, which is a wonder shot in its way. As drawn by our artist, all three balls are nearly dead in line and very nearly touching the top cushion. The distance they are apart is well enough indicated in the diagram—no measurements are necessary. As a matter of fact, however, this shot is not possible if all three balls are tight against the top cushion; but it is if they are only  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of an inch away from the cushion, which is the distance they are supposed to be in my diagram. The stroke I want is to run-through the red into the facing top pocket, and to do this I must clear the intervening white ball out of the way. This means that I must play not quite full towards the right of the red, thus sending that ball smashing against the white and driving it against the top cushion and taking it clear of the oncoming cue ball. I put as much top and right-hand side on the cue ball as I can impart, and play at brisk, sharp strength. Consequently my ball stops almost dead for a flash when it hits the red, the fullish contact and the shock of the pace cause it to make a perceptible pause, which pause helps to give the red time to kiss the white



7.—A CLEAR-THE-WAY STROKE.

*The stroke I want is to run-through the red into the facing top pocket, and to do this I must clear the intervening white ball out of the way. This means that I must play not quite full towards the right of the red, thus sending that ball smashing against the white and driving it against the top cushion and taking it clear of the oncoming cue ball.*

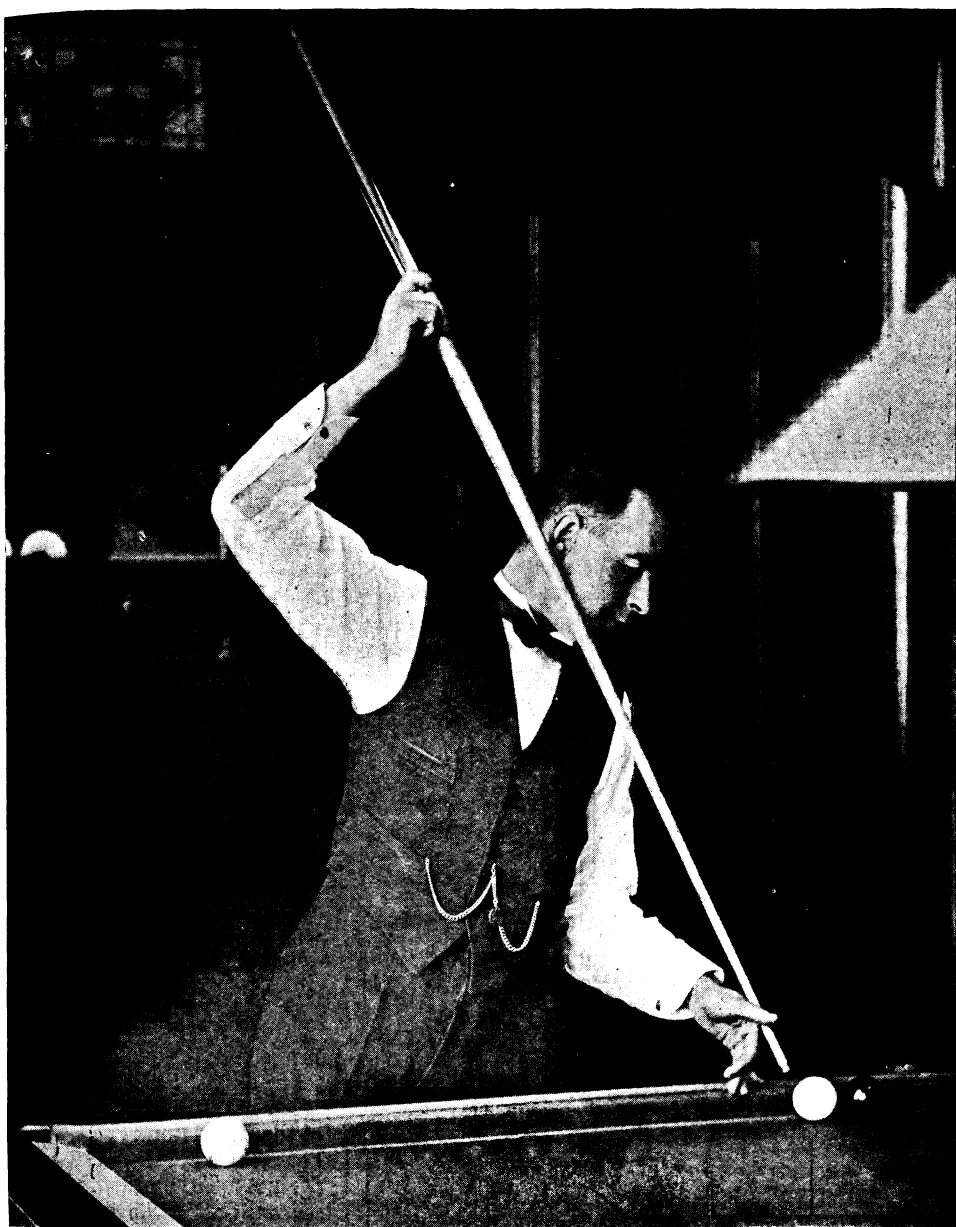


Photo by]

#### THE PICQUE CANNON.

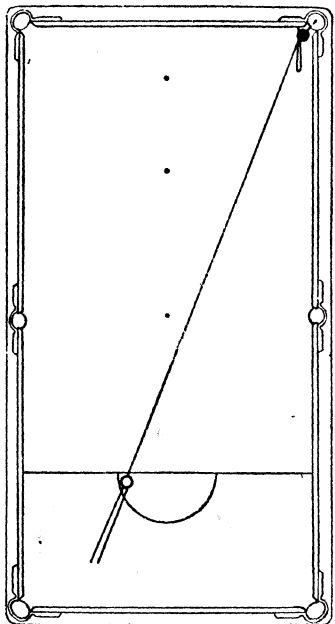
Victor Hey, Scarborough.

*The above photograph illustrates how the cue is held for the picque cannon (see Diagram c). This stroke calls for neat cuemanship—it is almost a matter of dropping the cue correctly on the ball. The cue ball travels merely a fraction of an inch to the red ball before coming back to make the cannon.*

game is clear, but if this position is not attained, there will be trouble, owing to the white not being handy for a cannon. It is a case of leaving the cue ball just where it should be and having a good game on, or of leaving little or nothing if correct position is not gained. And there is very little margin of permissible error. An inch of variation in the position of the

cue ball will make a good deal of difference—two inches will make all the difference between a very easy shot and a very hard one.

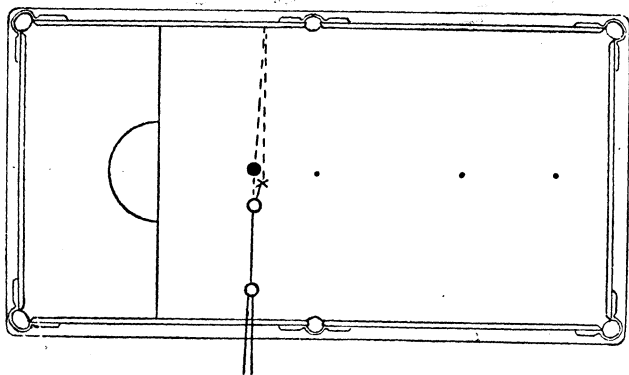
I have stressed the importance of position in this stroke because that is all there is in it. Anybody could pot the red ball, and when striving for the desired position it is usual to play dead strength, just to drop



8.—A CASE FOR POWERFUL CURVING WITH STRONG FORWARD SPIN AND SIDE.

*From the position as shown it is obviously essential to put the red into the top pocket in such a way that the cue ball is left in position near the top cushion for a cross-losers off the spotted red. If this is done, the path to the open game is clear, but if this position is not attained, there will be trouble, owing to the white not being handy.*

straight behind it. By striking my ball very low and sharp, I make it jump over the white, just grazing the far side of that ball as it drops into the pocket. This is an effective shot, but I should scarcely call it practical billiards. It is more of the nature of an exhibition shot, but it will serve to show what can be done with the jump stroke on an emergency. Incidentally, this is another stroke you do not want to practise on your own table.

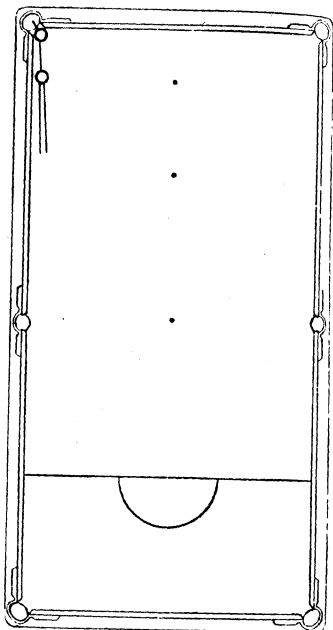


10.—AN AWKWARD RESULT OF A BADLY-PLAYED CANNON.

*All three balls are straight in line, and it is rather difficult to decide what to play for. There is no pocket worth attempting, and the only chance of a cannon is the kiss cannon I played for and made.*

the red in the pocket. This is a very pretty shot when it happens to be played to perfection, but is so tricky owing to the distance the cue ball has to travel that even the best of professional cuemen are exceedingly apt to make a mistake with it. Therefore I discard it altogether, and play the bold shot shown in my diagram. Using a tremendous amount of top and side, I hit the red full and very hard; my ball then goes through on to the top cushion, rebounds in a steep curve, sometimes coming back almost in a straight line and as much as a foot before it returns to the top cushion, where it stops almost humming with side and remains in perfect position for the cross loser.

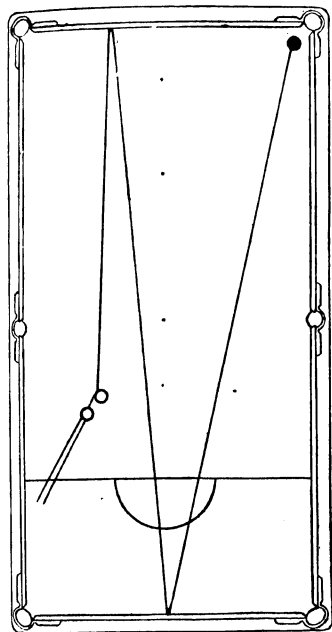
No mention of the wonder shots of the game would be complete without a reference to the jump shot, a specimen of which is shown in Diagram 9. The object-white is on the brink of the pocket as shown, and the cue ball is a foot or more



9.—THE JUMP SHOT.

*The object-white is on the brink of the pocket as shown, and the cue ball is a foot or more straight behind it. By striking my ball very low and sharp, I make it jump over the white, just grazing the far side of that ball as it drops into the pocket.*

My next two strokes are not of the exhibition type. I made both of them in actual play against Tom Newman last season, one in the final for the championship, the other in our series of matches. The first, Diagram 10, shows something very awkward I left for myself owing to a badly played cannon. A glance at the diagram shows that all three balls are straight in line, and it is rather difficult to decide what to play for. There is no pocket worth attempting, and the only chance of a cannon is the kiss cannon I played for and made. To make it, I aimed to hit

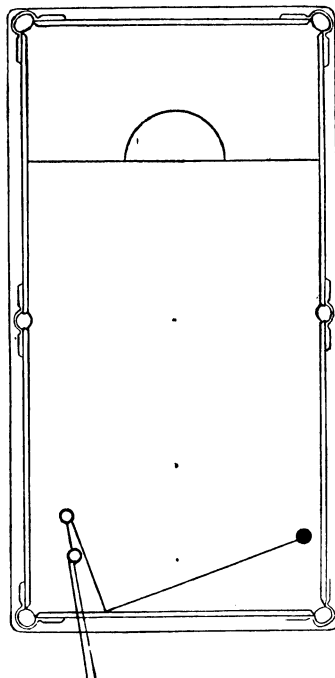


11.—A LACE CANNON.

*Accurate cueing and judgment of angles are called for to cope with this stroke. Little or no side is used. It is a matter of swinging the cue freely and truly, just "clipping" the white, and leaving the rest, gauging the angle correctly.*

Diagram 11 shows a shot Newman left for me. It is what is known as a "lace" cannon, whether because it is "fine work" or on account of the "pattern" the ball makes on the table, I am unable to say; but I do know that wonderfully accurate

cueing and judgment of angles are called for to cope with this stroke. Little or no side is used. It is a matter of swinging the cue freely and truly, just "clipping" the white, and leaving the rest, gauging the angle correctly. A wonderful stroke, "although I sez it as shouldn't."



12.—A VERY NASTY LEAVE.

*The only shot worth attempting is the one-cushion screw cannon played with strong left-hand side as shown by the artist, a shot which makes a full call on cuemanship.*



Photo by]

WILLIE SMITH.

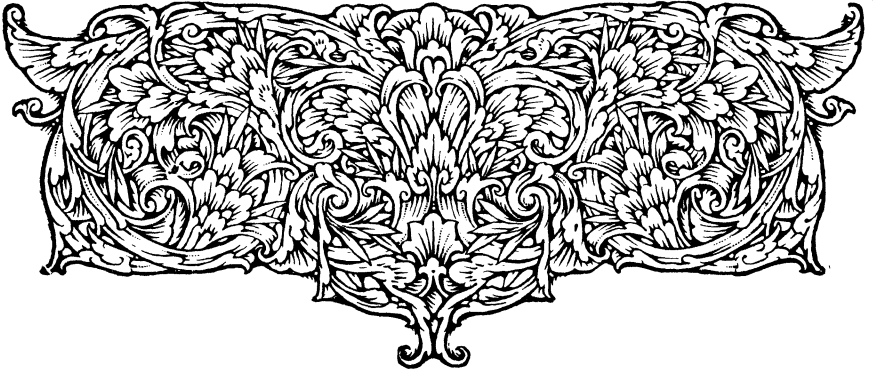
[Victor Hey, Scarborough.

cueing and judgment of angles are called for to cope with this stroke. Little or no side is used. It is a matter of swinging the cue freely and truly, just "clipping" the white, and leaving the rest, gauging the angle correctly. A wonderful stroke, "although I sez it as shouldn't."

My twelfth and last diagram shows a tremendously difficult stroke, one I made at Thurstons last season, and a wonder shot if ever there was one. The diagram makes the position of the balls clear, and a very nasty leave it is. The only shot worth attempting is the one-cushion screw cannon played with strong left-hand side as shown by the artist, a shot which makes a full call on all the cuemanship I know anything about. The

trouble is that plenty of screw is wanted to get the cue ball back to the top cushion, and on its arrival at the cushion the ball must carry an abundance of side to come off at the angle demanded by the cannon. It is this

combination of ball movement which makes the stroke so inordinately hard to achieve, and leaves no doubt in my mind about it being a worthy shot with which to end my article on the wonder shots of billiards.



## A MINOR POET.

**T**HE songs I sang lie scattered  
Through fields where few feet pass,  
Yet proud to be the daisies  
Among untrodden grass.

For here the questing bee came,  
And paused to hear me sing,  
To mingle with my measures  
Her sweetness and her sting.

And here the lark had leisure,  
When morning ways were wet,  
To hear me make mad music  
From memory and regret.

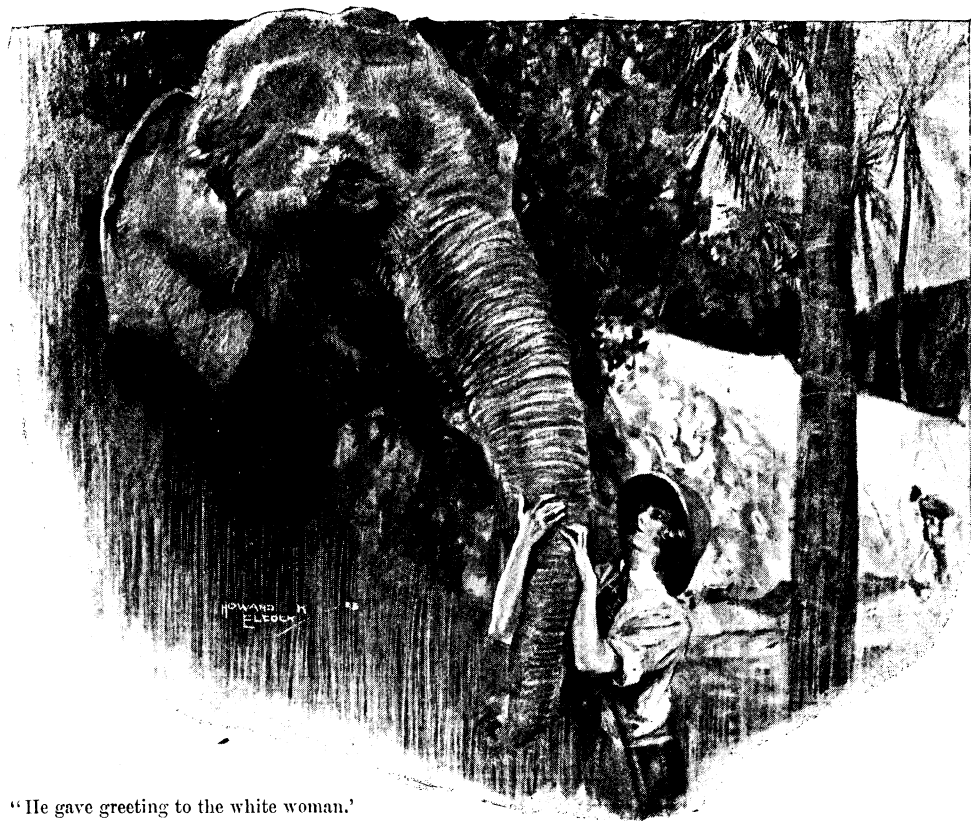
Had you but stooped to praise them—  
Those foolish songs of mine—  
The laurel of your listening  
Had made my muse divine.

Yet, when Death snaps my lyre,  
How soundly I shall sleep,  
While ever-folded daisies  
Above my dreaming creep!

For, borne by bee and bird-folk,  
Too late in quest of me,  
My poor songs' stingless sweetness,  
No more in minor key—

To deathless bloom transmuted,  
When bridle-paths smell sweet,  
Shall crave a place of pity—  
My heart's place—at your feet!

ETHEL M. HEWITT



"He gave greeting to the white woman."

# MOST WISE! MOST SUBTLE!

By GEORGE GILBERT

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

"**M**OST Wise! Most Subtle!" Chang Loi strained at the long trace-chains that linked his heavy pulling harness with the huge, rough-hewn structure of beams, inside which was the iron-barred cage. The tawny, striped shape of fear held safe behind the bars licked her chops, flicked a paw out, each curved claw like a razor for sharpness. Then, disappointed, she yowled, glared. The elephant tugged at the traces; the slippery green logs that formed the runners of the cage's carriage slid forward.

"Good work, Pra Walun," Robert Heeman, the American animal collector, praised. "Give Chang a double feed of the tenderest bamboo tips to-night."

"The Son of Health lives but to be served." And the calm, steady mahout tickled Chang Loi behind the ears with his toes as a sign to go forward. "On, thou most lovely of fleshly mountains, Chang Loi (Kingly Mount), on! Hearst thou what the Sahib orders? Most Wise! Most Subtle!"

The huge tigress, caught in a neatly vine-screened pit with a bait of young kid

*Copyright, by George Gilbert, in the United States of America.*



the night before, had been safely netted and dragged forth and caged. She was beautiful, of great size, in perfect condition. Her capture had rid the Muang Doeck of a terror that had killed thrice within a month inside the limits of the village—the last kill a babe, snatched from its mother's arms from the doorway of a Shan house raised on bamboo piles. So the capture of the tigress had been hailed as a blessing by all the people of that section of Shan-land. Hundreds, at a respectful distance, followed the captive, being tugged forward by Chang Loi steadily, eager to see the camp of this daring white man and to see, too, the white woman, the Memsahib, who was with him, for Heeman had brought his wife out with him on this journey, although he made her remain at the base camp and did not permit her to share with him the perils of deep-forest trapping and hunting.

Noting that the last obstacles between the trap-site and the campward main trail had been surmounted, and that all should be easy going for Chang Loi from then on, Heeman gave another phrase of approval to his chief mahout, Pra Walun, struck his Yunnan mule sharply, and rode off down the valley toward his main camp. He had been away since the evening before, had worked hard to get the tigress safely caged. Now he wanted to see how his wife, Ruth, was, for a slight headache had made him vaguely uneasy as to her. They had camped in a fever spot two days before, and she might be due for a slight touch of Meh Wong malaria. As he left the procession he heard again—

"Most Wise! Most Subtle! Hun-n-n-ph!" And the cage came sliding forward.

Heeman was content. A fine night's work had been done, and he had the tigress that the Most Gigantic Show had cabled for—a true hill-bred, active, fiery woods cat, not a mangy, stubbed tiger of the coastal plains. True, she had tasted flesh of man, yet it was not from lack of power and skill to kill other forms of life, the usual reason for a tiger's turning man-eater. Some freak had caused the huge, virile tigress to shed human blood, not loss of teeth and slackening of thew and nerve.

\* \* \* \*

"Ruth, you seem anxious. Is anything wrong? Have you fever?"

Heeman turned her rounded face up to his as he drew her to him. She had been sitting on the butt of a dried-out fallen

teak at the camp's centre. The tigress was coming in in the middle distance; the camp "boys" were busy with their usual tasks.

"No, I have no fever, but——"

"But what? There is something."

"It is ridiculous, but——"

"Yes?" he encouraged.

"I missed some sleep last night." And she met the gaze of his large grey eyes with that from her smaller, luminously grey ones. "I heard a noise of discussion. I did not take off my knicker suit, but slept in it, according to your notions. I found, when I crept out, that a Chinese opium smuggler was trying to sell some of the stuff to the 'boys.'" She paused, laughed nervously.

"Yes, go on"—smiling at her to reassure her with his looming presence. "What then?"

"I—I ran him out of camp with my mule whip and a gun."

"You did well. Who was he?"

"I cannot find out. Only an old Shan who was visiting at our camp fire told me it was some Chinese outcast the people here call The Black Smoke, from his trade in smuggled opium."

"I've heard of him, comrade, but as he's gone, we'll forget him. Now listen, and I'll tell you about the big tigress that Chang Loi is tugging in."

"Then you got her!"—her eyes shining, her trim figure tense with excitement as she glanced off up the valley, where the head of the triumphant procession was just in sight.

"Yes, and Chang Loi is bringing her in. I thought he would bolt and go *must* when Pra Walun brought him close to the cage, but the old fellow quieted down and has done his duty. Pra Walun says he was years ago used by some native chief Chow as a hunting elephant, and that his (Pra Walun's) grandfather drove him then. For good service the Chow gave the grandfather freedom for tax-labour and the elephant. Pra Walun only works the old fellow when he wants some extra money. They have grown old together, and neither of them does much, except the service pleases them."

Heeman, reassured as to his wife's condition, called sharp orders to the "boys," Madras and Chinese, with a sprinkling of Burmans and Siamese, and went back to superintend the getting of the tigress into the place at the camp's edge he had selected

for the big cage during their stay there. He intended to leave soon for Cheing M'ai and Bangkok with his big prize and the smaller ones taken during their long hunt in the No Man's Land of Shanland.

\* \* \* \*

The sudden dusk fell like a curtain. Fireflies twinkled on the rice plain below; the teaks whispered in the first of the night breeze. A spectral lemur sputtered from a limb overhead at the fires; afar a gibbon called in his contralto: "Hoop! Hoop! Ho-o-op! Oi-oi-oi-oi-oiioioi!"

A fruit-bat skimmed low, chattering, then, on spider-webbed wings of mystic silence, vanished. Atlas moths flitted, hand-breath wide on each wing's expanse. The forest breathed cool, mysterious after the day's stress.

Old Chang Loi, crushing with immense molars the ultimate honey-sweet content from the large meal of chopped bamboo tips given him to pay him for his heady work in tugging the great tigress into camp, rocked, and rumbled deep in his great stomach. From a pail left handy for him, he drew up some water into his trunk and spurted it on to his back, then sighed with content as it trickled into the wrinkles of his ancient hide.

Then he dreamed, rocking gently. And what visions might he not have had—processions of barbaric splendour in which he had been the chief delight of human eyes, from his strength and reputation as a tiger-slayer; attendance upon durbars, when his master of old times had gone to pay tribute of friendship to the Raj; the warm palms of generations of manlings, who in turn had grown old with him and become his mahouts, kind, wise in all elephantine lore; and, too, visions of women, of the palace, of the streets, of the woods, who had given him honey-cakes, ginger! And so he dreamed.

"Most Wise! Most Subtle!"

He stretched out his trunk's tip to meet the soft hand that took his offered caress on its cool palm. He gave greeting to the white woman, the Memsahib, for he was a gentleman and knew what was right and fitting. Ruth Heeman had stolen sugar for the great Burden Bearer, had swabbed out and cured for him a festered cut on his lower trunk that had made him all but lose his reason, as he feared that his trunk was about to rot off and leave him to starve; for nothing so unnerves an elephant as the tiniest sign of infection in that sensitive member. Ruth had adopted the native form

of expression, picked up the soothing phrases the elephant folk used when addressing their great ones. She had ridden Chang Loi without a howdah, using a big strap that Pra Walun fastened about his huge body as a hand-hold to steady her. She had ridden him to the deep pool below the camp and watched him bathe and drown off the wood's ticks that were in his wrinkled skin. Yes, the Memsahib was a lady and used him as a gentleman.

He felt for the bit of ginger he knew she had for him. He got it, tucked it back between two of his big molars, crushed it, enjoying the tang of it on tongue and throat to the full.

She went away after a farewell pat given to his wrinkled chest and a teasing fist-blow against his column-like right leg. Chang Loi's stomach-deep chuckle followed her as she went back to the camp fire, where her own meal was ready.

Chang Loi dreamed again, huge, looming up like a mass of primal matter. His wrinkled and slit right ear, torn long ago by a tiger, flapped. He sighed, rocked.

\* \* \* \*

"Son of Wisdom," Pra Walun answered Heeman's question as to The Black Smoke, as they sat, after the evening meal, at the door of Heeman's tent, "the smuggler of opium is evil. We must watch. He will do some mischief."

"Then if he comes again——"

The old mahout leaned over and touched the butt of Heeman's pistol. "Thus it shall be!"

Ruth came out of the tent and passed them, giving Pra Walun: "Is it well with thee, ancient?"

"Well, Memsahib. In thy shadow I dwell in safety." For, like his Burden-Bearer, Pra Walun was a gentleman, courtly, easy-mannered.

Heeman and Pra Walun watched her as she strolled over toward where the great cage was, relieved of its protecting beams. To bring the cage in in sections had been a hard task, yet it would pay for the trouble, as now the tigress would be landed in New York without injury such as might have come by having her brought to the coast with her paws roped together and chafed, her head bagged, her jaws muzzled to cruel gear.

"Be careful, Ruth," Heeman warned; "she has very long forelegs and an uncommon reach."

"I'll be careful, Bob," she called, shifting

her glance from the tawny terror behind the bars, with its slumberous yellow eyes veiled, its every stripe showing in the brilliant glow from the leaping flames.

And so, turning her head, she failed to see the upturned root the cage had ground up to the surface, and she caught her toe on it and fell. Thud! Like an unleashed tornado, the striped, throbbing, hate-torn body of the huge cat struck the bars, her immense right forepaw shot out, each claw shining in the fire-gleam like a hooked, evil menace.

A shout from the men; the rush of fear-smitten bodies, yells, flares of torches; the yowls of the tiger-devil as she drew back into her cage spitting, wiping something from one claw-tip with avid tongue.

"There's blood on your hand! Are you much hurt? Speak, Ruth!"

Heeman bent over her. She rolled over, snapped erect, white of face, but laughing.

"No. She just touched my thumb as my hand flew out in falling. She barely scratched it—see!"

The tension of relief was so great that Heeman found himself laughing hysterically, like a girl, as he bound up the torn ball of Ruth's thumb, that was dripping red drops.

"The Memsahib must keep away," Pra Walun said firmly, with respect, too. "Woe is me if one of my employers comes to harm!"

"Yes, keep away," Heeman advised. "She is wild, and will strike at anyone that comes within reach. A recently caged man-eater is the worst of all tigers to handle and tame."

"I'll be careful," Ruth promised. "But let me sit here, at a distance, and look her over. I've hardly seen her yet."

She sat down on the dried teak butt and eyed the tawny beast, that now rested, crouched, tail lashing, eyes all but veiled by down-hung yellow lids, each hair of her whiskers quiveringly eager.

"You are a beauty and a devil," Ruth said to her, in leaving her, "a beauty and a devil. You are worth five thousand dollars to us, and I'll be glad when your market is made."

\* \* \* \* \*

Ruth, her thumb sore from the rough surgery Bob had to inflict upon her to guard against possible infection from that meat-tainted claw, was just a wee bit uneasy. She could not do all that she wished to do until the hand ceased to throb. So she had to remain about the main camp,

while Heeman, Pra Walun, and many others went up along a promising cliff-wall to trap gibbons, lemurs, and others of the monkey folk and squirrel families. Chang Loi, left behind, too, she visited, bringing him ginger, sugar, fruits. At her command he swung her up and paced off down the stream to the bathing pool. And after he had had his bath and so frightened away a possible lurking cayman, she went in and enjoyed her swim, and then, after she had coiffed her hair in the pool's mirror, she rode back with him. So the days passed. And often Ruth, careful, made doubly so by her wound, stood at a safe distance and gazed at the tiger. And as often as she did so the tawny beast yawned, licked her great chops with her rasp-like, red tongue, and made her whiskers wink at the white Memsahib.

"You are a beauty and a devil," Ruth would say, standing between Chang Loi's immense forelegs and looking at the tiger, after having halted the big Burden Bearer there, that she might slide down from off his towering back and gaze her fill at the destroyer.

Thud! The balled-up, striped body would smash against the cage's bars.

Chang Loi, trumpeting angrily, would wave his python-like trunk and go back a step, shepherding the Memsahib with him.

"Most Wise! Most Subtle!" Ruth would say to him, patting his down-hung, wrinkled skin of chest.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And The Black Smoke?" Heeman asked of Pra Walun, as they made ready to go off up-valley to the Cliff of the Monkeys.

"Has he been seen?"

"Most Beneficent, he is as if he never had been," was the reply.

"The Memsahib will be safe in the camp, then?"

"With him gone, yes, Most Worthy. And he will hardly be back, for I have spread the word that we are to complain to the Court, and the Court will do much to satisfy the white people. Besides, we are to leave five 'boys' in the camp—good, honest fellows."

"It will be, then, safe?"

"If the Memsahib will remain near the camp, or, if she goes, take Chang Loi."

"You hear, Ruth?"—calling into her tent. He had started before she was ready to come out to begin her new day.

"Yes, Bob. Rest easy. I and Chang Loi will not be apart if I stir from the camp. I've got my gun, too, you know."

The long, sun-kissed, brilliant hours passed. Ruth used her camera to secure wanted pictures of a pilfering mynah bird that would come down and chatter. Then she sat and watched the tigress, photographed her in a number of attitudes, and regretted that the bars made it impossible to obtain a really good picture. She sat and watched the huge beast, that licked its chops and yawned at her. Ruth shook her bandaged thumb at her. "Oh, you beauty, you devil!"

Thud! Then a yowl, spitting, clawing—futile.

Ruth laughed.

A low, warning trumpet from Chang Loi made her turn. She went toward him. As she passed the group of five "boys" who were sitting at the camp's centre, talking with a bent man in the garb of a Yunnan trader, she did not even pause. The "boys" were chaffing with him for trifles. They gazed after her aslant as she passed.

There was a great teak down-river below her swimming pool that Ruth had hoped to photograph in its entirety. She had studied it from every angle, trying to find some one spot from which she could get its towering bulk on to one of her largest plates without tipping the camera or otherwise distorting the image. On her last trip down to the pool she had found a smaller tree, bare on one side, and by getting into its branches she thought she could get a full view, from half-way up, that would give her the desired true image of the giant teak on her camera's plate. She did not want to risk losing hold of the camera in being hoisted up atop Chang Loi's back; she did not want to call one of the stupid camp boys to carry it for her. It was not a far walk down to the pool, so she unsnapped Chang Loi's leg-chains and tucked the camera under one arm, took his down-hung trunk in her right hand and guided him. He needed no second invitation. Trumpeting softly, he stepped along, knightly, dignified, on his honour to be majestic, to see that the Memsahib, his Memsahib, came to no harm.

So, thou Mighty One, so thou Little One, to the pool, to sunlit pleasures!

"But if the Sahib should know," spluttered one "boy," as the Yunnanese trader pressed upon him a draught of rice wine out of an earthenware pottle with a dun dragon on its rotund belly.

"How is he to know, *yainday* (bump-kin)?"—and he made the tempting liquor to gurgle in the pottle's neck.

"Then one each," the "boy" in charge consented, his fears allayed by the easy bargains the trader had given them.

Silence then, except that the hot liquor gurgled down yearning throats. The drinking done, the bottle emptied, the trader stole off quietly, leaving the "boys" to chat. One by one they grew heavy of eye, staggered off to sleep in a snug nook between two great cases of dried specimen skins.

Soon the camp was still. The saucy mynah scolded and came down for crumbs, a small viper scuttled across the warm rocks above, a vulture floated on high, a mere speck of black.

The great tigress yawned, then got up softly. She tested the bars, one by one, surged against the door that was held fast by a well-shot bolt that had a hook on the sliding bar to permit a long pole to be used to fasten it back, should need arise, and without danger to the human being using the pole. Fearing her surges would cause the bolt to inch back, Heeman had kept the long pole handy before the cage for that purpose.

There was a rustle in the thicket that made the tawny caged terror to raise her ears like a dog that is interested in some passing squirrel or gliding lizard. Her whiskers twitched. She sat up on her sharp haunches and yawned, tucked her tail in half-circle about her right hip, stretched her forepaws on the cage's floor, unsheathed and sheathed her claws.

Again the rustle, nearer now. The Yunnanese trader sidled into view around the Heeman tent. He fell upon his belly, wriggled forward, reaching for the butt of the long pole. He got it, drew back. The tigress yawned, unsheathed and sheathed her great claws anew. She laid down, snuggled to the cage-floor, every stripe showing, her immense, corded muscles rippling under the skin of her.

The Yunnan trader glided into the Heeman tent, leaving the long-pole outside. He came out presently with a bundle of Ruth's clothing—white, light in his arms. He balled this up, made a hard wad of it, lashed with cords that he found in the dunnage in the tent. The tigress watched him with avid eyes. Fire seemed to lurk in their lethal depths.

The Yunnanese lashed the end of the long pole with the end of a light, hard-twisted cord of Manila hemp, strong, supple. He reached up and set the hook of the pole into the eye of the bolt. Then, leaving the

tip-end of the pole so hooked up, he rested the butt on to the ground. He walked off, after casting one of Ruth's stockings at the caged cat, that pounced upon it like a dog upon a bone. He smiled evilly to see the tigress shred the stocking and sniff at the very threads of it. She sat up, licked her paws as she had done when she had cut Ruth's thumb-ball with her talon.

The Yunnanese, paying off the cord that was tied to the pole's butt, looked back often. At times he set the wad of clothing on to the ground, leaving the trail of scent after him. The ball of cord, paid out so, carried him, perhaps, a hundred yards down the path toward the pool where Ruth and Chang Loi were. And there, at the butt of a teak-bole, the man stopped, pressed the clothing to the ground

when he had reached the first limb, he legged up over it and, after being settled comfortably, hung the wad of clothing on the limb and tugged at the cord. The cord stiffened, sang like a fiddle-string.



"The python-like trunk flicked out."

for the last time in a spot where he could see the impress of the woman's shoe. Then he began to climb the teak, letting the cord lie slack back of him and with care. But

then fell limp. The man smiled, licked his chops.

A roar at the camp—a roar triumphant! The long, tawny, striped body shot out

of the cage into the sunlight. Like a flash the tigress swept out of the circle of tents and man-scented things. In her mouth she

since being captured; she was hungry, wild with rage against the man-things. The scent was breast-high, scent of that man



"She clutched the limb."

had yet shreds of Ruth's stockings, and she chewed them as she bounded; her nose went to each place the wad of clothing had been pressed. She had not eaten

who reeked of some sinister, evil odour that she loathed, and scent of the white-faced man-thing she had drawn a fleck of blood from. The tang of that one drop of blood was at her throat's

middle as she quested the trail, for it had had a lure to it different from that of the blood of the lean, brown natives she had slain theretofore.

The Yunnanese, watching her come, smiled again. His opium-soaked brain had partly cleared. The reek of the pipe was on him; he was not as firm of muscle as he was of evil will.

He bent over to watch her come—great eyes blazing, tail twitching, body low to the ground now. She came with sudden starts, bounds, eager yet careful.

Crack! The limb on which he was sitting snapped. With a snarl she saw him come hurtling down. She jumped aside, fearing a trap, wild with hate of all man-things. Her terrible forepaw barely touched his head, and yet— He was so still, stretched out there, after a few convulsions, that the tigress feared he was shamming. The blood flowed, yet it was tainted with that evil, nose-clogging reek. She spat at him, leaped over. The fair scent, the sweet scent, the scent of the white woman whose blood she had tasted, was ahead.

The wavering shadows of the nearer thickets claimed her. A low lilt of human laughter off below came echoing. The mynah bird scolded back at the camp. The five "boys" snored.

All was still again, save that the ants began to gather in swarms where The Black Smoke's body was so limp, so inert, and the vulture up there above the teak-tops swirled down lower and lower.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tying one end of a stout cord to her camera, the other to her middle, Ruth had Chang Loi swing her up to the first limb of the tree from which she purposed taking the photograph of the giant teak. Stepping off the loving bulk, Ruth bade Chang Loi to wade into the pool and bathe. She, on her part, went up, limb by limb. Her holstered gun bothered her, and she left it on the first limb, one close to the ground. Well up, snuggled against the side of the tree where it was bare by some accident of forest growth, she had a magnificent view of the teak. She got the tree on to the range-finder to suit her, lashed the camera fast to the tree-trunk, for she wanted several pictures as the light changed, and had her roll of films all ready—none used—for that purpose. She waited.

Chang Loi, in the pool, enjoyed to the full the easeful moments. No weighty howdah

to-day! No tugging of caged tiger-cats over rocks and hummocks!

He drew a huge trunkful of water up, spurted it back. He lolled, he rolled. He felt the burrowing ticks, one by one, let go, and then peace came. He relaxed, upcurled his trunk, sank down on his knees until he was almost out of sight.

"Chang Loi!"

Like a waterspout he surged up from the pool's depths. He heard her at the first thrill of her vibrant young voice.

Glancing down, Ruth had seen the rush of the tigress for the butt of her tree. A single instant the tawny terror paused there, gazing up to make sure, then sprang for that lower limb where was the holstered gun. She caught, hung, spat.

Chang Loi came out, cascading the water on either hand and ahead. The tiger, disconcerted by the confusion, by the oddly swaying man-thing on the limb, clawed at the holster, yowled, toppled, fell, leaping sidewise, as she fell, to land on four bouncing feet. Then, before she could catch herself, Chang Loi was before the tree, trumpeting, menacing.

Ruth, above, felt the clutch of fear as she saw the tigress focus greedy eyes past the elephant and on her—read the evident purpose of the cat that crouched.

Chang Loi, crafty, alert, did not move until, with a single rush, the tigress tried to pass him and get to the tree's bole. But the bulk of the elephant was interposed. The terrible forepaw shot out; the tender trunk-tip was swung out of reach, and the blood only flowed from the gash in Chang Loi's right knee. He trumpeted wildly now.

"O Most Wise! Most Subtle!" the loved voice of the Memsahib floated down to him encouragingly.

The heat of slaughter cleared from the old tiger-hunter's brain. It was not thus that he had harried them out of the jungles of old for the Great Raj. It was by craft—trunk kept on high, head to the beast, eyes wide open, pulses steady.

Again the tigress charged. She had found opposition in her hunting now for the first time. Up until then, when she had minded to kill, all had fled from before her, but now— Again the huge bulk interposed, and she was forced to spend her force in a leap at it and a gash on its broad side. The blood flowed; she licked her claws.

"Most Wise! Most Subtle!"

There is need for all thy wisdom now, Raj of Elephanta. Need for thy subtlety as well.

The tiger charged anew, pretended to leap high, skulked low, clawed at the tree-hole under Chang Loi's belly, tail lashing his legs.

He wheeled, crashed down with one fore-foot.

She leaped aside, in time to save herself, and, as she went, ripped at the ham of him—ripped cruelly, terribly. Chang Loi groaned with pain, staggered, for the claws had cut close to the hamstring. Then she turned, sank her great white teeth into his flank for a single flashing second and was off from the tree, crouched, fresh, devilish in her merciless hate. Chang Loi lowered his trunk, moaned, swayed, as he turned again to face her in time to see her settle for what he sensed would be the final charge.

"Most Wise! Most Subtle!"

Her voice, soft, pleading, encouraging, came down to him. He hung his head wearily, stepped aside, swayed.

Like a yellow arrow, the great shape of fear sped—straight to the tree's girth. The claws caught, clung, the striped body hunched itself toward the lowest limb, which, once gained, would give her the awful victory. She clutched the limb.

"Oh, Chang Loi, traitor?"

His mountainous bulk whirled. O Most Wise and Subtle, cunning with the cunning of the tiger-hunts of the Great Raj!

The python-like trunk flicked out, regardless of the claws that might rip it and cause death by starvation if the wounds festered. The flick of it was true! It wrapped about one down-hung leg, tugged at it and the striped horror lost balance, crashed down, spitting.

"Now, Chang Loi!"

A great pile-driving hoof came down on to the back that was arched for the spring to safety. The tigress turned, belly up, her skin loose, twisting almost free as she swerved. Yet a saving shred of that barred hide held under the forefoot of Chang Loi, and before she could gather herself, the other forefoot had landed and then—

Yowl now, spit, claw, rip, make the blood to flow. It is as it was in the days of the Great Raj—foot by foot, tread by tread, inch by fatal inch, thy life's wine shall be trodden out there, while the sun looks down between the breaks in the leaf-screen, and the trumpeting of the victor goes up to

where the great black vulture soars ever lower and lower. The striped terror ceased to yowl, to claw. Chang Loi sank on his knees, using them yet to knead that hated monster.

A feather-weight fell upon his back, a loved voice came:

"Up, Thou Mighty!"

He stood erect, trembling yet with the stress of battle won. Reaching for the gun that hung yet on the limb where she had placed it, she snapped the belt into place about her slim zone and slid to the ground. She did not need to examine the dead animal. She ran her eyes and then her soft fingers over the hurts of the victor, glad to find that, after all, they were such as cleansing and Nature would cure. That in the leg, over the hamstring, was most severe, and that would heal if Chang Loi were not worked too soon.

She coaxed him into the pool and laved his gashed skin with the cool, sweet water. He stood bravely for the operation. Then, the blood staunching, he went out of the water and back to the camp, where Ruth routed out the drugged "boys" and sent them to call in Heeman and to tell him that The Black Smoke and the great tigress were dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

The twilight came, mystic, wonderful. The mist wraiths crept out over the rice plain below, shutting off the fireflies' weaving patterns of light, for they were in bridal processional there, in two long, fluttering columns. The moths on silent wings spat against the tent-flap. The forest breathed; overhead a star peeped in through the crack it had found in the leaf-roof. The firelight flickered, the men talked.

Ruth, at the head of Chang Loi, patted his down-hung, protecting trunk. Beside her Heeman stood. His voice came:

"Most Wise! Most Subtle! The pension the Great Raj left you and Pra Walun shall be doubled. Bring him a quart of arrack in warm honey-water, boy."

"Most Wise! Most Subtle!" Ruth whispered, taking his trunk-tip between her cool palms.

"Said I not so, that he was both wise and subtle?" Pra Walun boasted. "Hah, Son of Ten Million Pigs, am I forgotten and the Memsahib alone remembered? What! I—Pra Walun—am put aside? . . ."

Chang Loi rocked and rocked. Truly he was content that hour—happy to be with those he had served so loyally.





# THE HILLTOP

By FAY INCHFAWN

*Author of "Homely Verses of a Home Lover,"  
and "Through the Windows of a Little House."*

**T**O-DAY, on grey and silver wing,  
The sun went early westering.  
Sapphires and emeralds gleamed again  
On grassy mound, in rutted lane.



The unclad willows, graceful-limbed,  
Leaned where the shining river brimmed,  
And, like a sudden shaft of blue,  
The kingfisher went darting through.



Then how the clear sky seemed to call!  
And purple hills perpetual,  
Lured my slow feet till, stair by stair,  
I clambered to the cleaner air.



And as the keen insistent wind  
Left the warm valley far behind,  
Something within me groped afar  
Towards, then past, the evening star.



"Supper was a curious meal."

# TRY-AGAIN ISLAND

By K. R. G. BROWNE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

THE nose of the little sailing dinghy grounded on the sand. The tall young man in the wonderful flannels leaped nimbly ashore, hauled the craft a yard up the beach, and turned to hold out a hand to the girl in the stern. That young lady, however, jumped lightly to the sand at his side and stood looking about her with an expression of supreme content.

"Oh, isn't it heavenly?" she said, and drew a long breath.

"Rather!" agreed the flannelled young man. "By Jove, yes!"

Certainly there were worse spots wherein to spend a blue and golden day of early summer. The island was no more than half a mile long by some five hundred yards broad; at its northern end a platoon of wind-twisted trees grew down almost to

the water's edge; the rest was sea and sky and sand dunes and long, tough grass. A mile away the mainland shimmered in the heat haze.

"Oh, look!" said the girl. "There's somebody in the bungalow!"

The building to which she pointed seemed scarcely worthy of so proud a name. It stood in a hollow a hundred yards away, and was actually little more than an overgrown shed. It possessed a solid-looking door, three windows, a tarred roof, and elementary verandah and an immense water-butt. Curtains hung at the windows and a decrepit deck-chair stood upon the verandah.

"By Jove, yes!" said the flannelled young man. "Fisherman, probably."

"Well, let's go and call on him. If he's

got a fire, we shan't have the bother of boiling a kettle for lunch."

Together they left the beach and climbed up over the yielding dunes. As they neared the bungalow there became apparent further evidence of its occupied condition. Upon an improvised clothes-line sundry garments of an intimate masculine character swayed in the breeze; a pair of oars leaned against the wall; a small black kitten slumbered in the porch. The girl, mounting to the verandah, knocked gently upon the door. Footsteps sounded from within; the door opened and a young man stood upon the threshold, regarding them with a polite surprise.

He was a large young man with reddish hair and a powerful jaw. He was arrayed in a shirt, grey flannel trousers, and elderly carpet-slippers; in one hand he held a pipe, in the other a fountain pen. At sight of him the girl started violently; her immaculate escort uttered a faint exclamation.

"Oh!" said the girl. "Jerry!"

"Hullo, Elizabeth!" said the large young man. "How goes it? And Derek, too, I see. Welcome to our island."

The girl, recovered from her initial surprise, drew back a step; her expression hardened perceptibly.

"What are you doing here?" she said.

"Writing," explained the large young man. "I've been here a week. It's rather jolly, you know. But—you didn't come to call on me, did you?"

"No," said Elizabeth crisply. "We did not. Nobody told us you were here, or we wouldn't have come."

"Of course not," agreed Jerry with the utmost cheerfulness.

There ensued a slightly awkward pause. Derek shuffled his feet and stared uncomfortably out to sea; Elizabeth had the air of one groping for suitable words; Jerry contemplated them both with a courteous interest.

It was, in truth, a difficult moment, calling for the exercise of tact and diplomacy on the part of all concerned. For a period of four weeks the large young man had filled the position of *fiancé* to Elizabeth; barely a fortnight ago he had vacated that post with considerable abruptness, after a tempestuous little scene during which home truths had flown about like snowflakes in a gale. Elizabeth, who had supposed her ex-*fiancé* to be at the other end of England, was momentarily taken aback by this encounter. The Book of Etiquette contains

no hints on the proper management of such a situation.

Only Jerry seemed completely at ease. "Judging by Derek's admirable trouserings," he remarked, "you came here for a picnic. And now I suppose you'll be turning round and sailing into the west again. I'm really awfully sorry to upset your plans like this. If I'd known you were coming, I'd have gone ashore for the day."

Elizabeth's clear blue gaze rested upon him in a half-puzzled, half-resentful manner. One does not demand much of a discarded *fiancé*, but one does at least expect him to display some symptoms of grief at his loss. Jerry displayed nothing of the kind; not only was he by far the most composed of the three, but he seemed not to care in the least whether Elizabeth remained on the island or departed forthwith. Not unnaturally, therefore, Elizabeth, whose first thought had been that on no account would she linger an unnecessary minute in his neighbourhood, suddenly perceived that she must stay. To annul her arrangements for the day on account of this *contretemps* would amount almost to a confession of cowardice. Moreover, she began now to be aware of a reprehensible but human desire to cause annoyance to Jerry by forcing him to study the graceful Derek in the rôle of ardent swain. That, reflected Elizabeth, would do Jerry quite a lot of good.

"Why should we go?" she said smoothly. "There's plenty of room on the island, unless you want it all yourself."

Jerry raised protesting hands to heaven. "Great Scot, no! Don't go on my account, please. Make yourselves at home. You'll find it quite pleasant under those trees. Can I help at all—lend you a tin-opener, or boil a kettle, or anything?"

"Thank you," said Elizabeth, turning away, "but we can boil our own kettle. Come on, Derek."

"Have a good time," said Jerry encouragingly. Elizabeth, marching briskly away, heard the door close as her late betrothed withdrew into the bungalow.

As a camping-ground the spot indicated by Jerry proved fully worthy of his recommendation; the food, conveyed by hamper from the mainland, was all that the most fastidious could have desired. Yet somehow lunch was not an unqualified success. Derek, who proved unexpectedly inept at fire-lighting, inadvertently besmirched the dazzling purity of his flannels, and thereafter exhibited a slight tendency to

peevishness ; Elizabeth, craving tea, was compelled to subsist upon lemonade of a singularly gaseous brand. The meeting with Jerry seemed to have cast something of a blight over the feast, rendering conversation spasmodic and uninspiring.

The meal over, Derek lit a cigarette and stretched himself at Elizabeth's feet. He felt out of tune with the universe, for, having brought Elizabeth to the island solely that he might submit to her his qualifications for the post lately relinquished by Jerry, he found himself quite unable to broach the subject. Usually a particularly fluent talker, he now could think of nothing whatever to say. He eyed his disfigured flannels moodily and cursed Jerry with a wealth of mental detail.

Elizabeth, too, was disinclined for idle prattle. The shock of the meeting with her *ex-fiancé* had sent her thoughts flying back to a period which she had tried earnestly—and, as she thought, successfully—to forget.

It is an acknowledged but unexplained fact that while the majority of marriages may be made in heaven, a very considerable number owe their origin to a sea-voyage. The most insignificant of men somehow looks distinguished upon a liner's deck, and Jerry was far from being insignificant at any time. To Elizabeth, boarding the *s.s. Orana* at Alexandria after a winter at Cairo, he had appeared positively impressive when first she encountered him upon the promenade deck ; and Jerry had made no effort to hide the fact that the impression was mutual. Shipboard friendships ripen fast, and particularly when the persons concerned are the youngest members of an otherwise middle-aged passenger-list. A succession of Mediterranean nights and calm blue days produced in Jerry and Elizabeth the feeling of having known each other for years—so much so, indeed, that the day that saw their arrival in England saw also their engagement an accomplished fact. Hesitation had never been one of Jerry's failings.

It was only when Elizabeth, with Jerry faithful in attendance, resumed her place in her own circle that doubts began to creep in. Elizabeth, a polished product of modern society, was at first surprised, then pained and finally vaguely irritated to discover that her way of life—to which she could imagine no endurable alternative—only wearied Jerry to the verge of tears. Jerry, against a background of sky and heaving sea, had been a noteworthy personality ;

in a drawing-room or upon a dancing-floor he became, to put it bluntly, a clumsy lout. He proved to be one of those men who knock things over, tread heavily on cats and blush richly while apologising. That natural vigour which had seemed so attractive under other conditions caused him to stand out among Elizabeth's friends like an elephant among a herd of antelope. Worst of all, perhaps, was his dancing, or, rather, his complete lack of that gentlemanly accomplishment. Elizabeth danced incessantly and with the light grace of a leaf in the wind ; Jerry danced only under compulsion and, as he readily admitted, like a bale of hay. Elizabeth suffered for a time in silence, but the covert amusement of her friends at Jerry's uncouthness was not without its effect upon her temper.

The inevitable explosion was not long delayed. Jerry, taken to task for some glaring breach of ballroom etiquette, displayed an unrepentant front—in fact, he was foolish enough to laugh about it. Whereat Elizabeth, losing her temper, said many things that ordinarily would have remained unsaid. Jerry, goaded to thoughtlessness, retorted in kind, and the interview ended with some suddenness. With it ended the engagement, though neither could afterwards have said quite how that came about. Jerry, rather less cheerful than usual, departed to digest the information that his rotten dancing did not matter in itself, but was merely one more proof that he did not care enough to try to adapt himself to Elizabeth's world. Elizabeth, her head held high, went back to the ballroom to dance herself into a condition almost of coma. And that, as she explained later to her entirely bewildered mother, was that.

Elizabeth, leaning back against her tree, let her glance rest upon the graceful figure of Derek. Derek, master of all the social arts and an ornament to any gathering, was to Jerry as the racehorse to the Clydesdale. Elizabeth was perfectly aware of his reason for suggesting the island expedition, but she was not so certain of her own mind. She was not sure that she wanted to marry Derek ; she was not sure that she wanted to marry anybody. Yet it would be pleasant to dangle a scalp before Jerry, if only to test that attitude of care-free gheeriness which—

Derek broke her train of thought at this point by sitting up suddenly and possessing himself of her hand. Apparently, he, too, had been thinking.

"Look here, Elizabeth," he said, "I want to——"

He was interrupted by a sudden crash of thunder overhead. A drop of rain splashed upon Elizabeth's hand. So absorbed had they been in their meditations that the abrupt change in the weather had escaped

As a location for a picnic the clump of trees owned every qualification; as a refuge against the fury of Nature it proved somewhat lacking in essentials. The rain, descending in full flood with but a second's warning, tore through the foliage as if it did not exist. The wind howled past at a



"Elizabeth surveyed him scornfully. 'If you want to get under cover, run along! I'm not stopping you. But I stay here.'"

their notice. The shelter of the trees had held from them the knowledge of a darkening sky, a rising wind, and a sea that was beginning to heave angrily. Even as Derek, in defiance of the elements, was about to resume his discourse on matrimony, one of those sudden storms for which the coast was justly renowned broke with a violence that drove all else from their minds.

speed which rendered breathing difficult and intimate conversation impossible. A continuous grumbling of thunder indicated worse to come. In less than five minutes Elizabeth and Derek were wet to the skin. The former's hair clung in little damp curls about her face; the latter's noticeable blazer took on the aspect of a sodden rag. Elizabeth emitted no murmur of complaint,

but Derek evinced a tendency to rail at Fate. No man looks his best in soaked flannels, and he knew it. He seemed inclined to harp upon the fact that shelter lay within easy reach.

"You'll get pneumonia or something," said Derek pettishly, vainly endeavouring to stay the stream that trickled briskly down his neck. "Come on—let's make a dash for the bungalow. What's the sense of sticking—"

Elizabeth surveyed him scornfully. "If you want to get under cover, run along! I'm not stopping you. But I stay here."

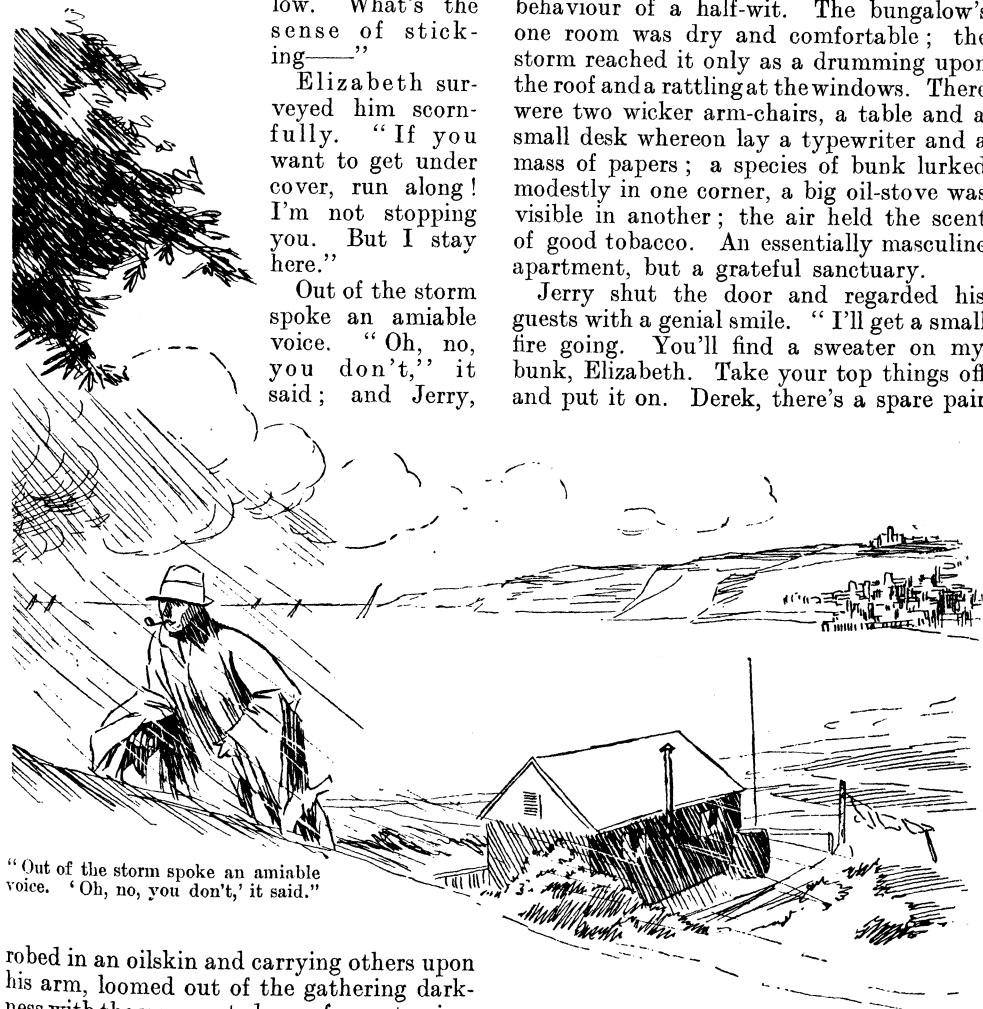
Out of the storm spoke an amiable voice. "Oh, no, you don't," it said; and Jerry,

There followed a curious little pause, while the wind whined through the trees, the rain beat down remorselessly, and Derek shivered in the background. Then:

"Very well," said Elizabeth tonelessly, and slid into the oilskin.

Once within the bungalow, she was compelled to admit that to have remained outside merely because she had once been engaged to its tenant would have been the behaviour of a half-wit. The bungalow's one room was dry and comfortable; the storm reached it only as a drumming upon the roof and a rattling at the windows. There were two wicker arm-chairs, a table and a small desk whereon lay a typewriter and a mass of papers; a species of bunk lurked modestly in one corner, a big oil-stove was visible in another; the air held the scent of good tobacco. An essentially masculine apartment, but a grateful sanctuary.

Jerry shut the door and regarded his guests with a genial smile. "I'll get a small fire going. You'll find a sweater on my bunk, Elizabeth. Take your top things off and put it on. Derek, there's a spare pair



"Out of the storm spoke an amiable voice. 'Oh, no, you don't,' it said."

robed in an oilskin and carrying others upon his arm, loomed out of the gathering darkness with the unexpectedness of a pantomime demon. "Put this on and come inside."

"No, thank you," said Elizabeth. She felt vaguely that she was being merely silly, but her soul revolted at the thought of being under an obligation to a man who laughed when he made a fool of his dancing partner.

"Buck up!" said Jerry curtly. "Why die of exposure because I'm a worm? Quick—put it on!"

of bags in that cupboard. Take 'em out on the verandah and slide into 'em if you don't want rheumatism to set in."

He dropped on his knees before the open fireplace and became busy with driftwood and matches. Elizabeth, after an instant's hesitation, turned towards the bunk. She disliked being thus ordered about, but that was a poor reason for contracting pneumonia

or some kindred ill. Derek snatched the trousers from their hiding-place and went moodily outside.

Five minutes later the three assembled about a cheerful little fire, Elizabeth extraordinarily attractive in a sweater much too large for her small person, Derek morosely taciturn in a pair of trousers much too long, and Jerry his indomitably amiable self.

"That's better," said this last, throwing a log on the fire. "You two sit there and dry out. If you'll excuse me, I'll just finish a job of work, and perhaps you wouldn't mind posting it when you get ashore."

From a cupboard he produced a pile of magazines and set them at Elizabeth's elbow; then he drew a chair to the desk and began to write.

There ensued a period of almost complete silence, wherein the only sounds were the rustling of papers, the drumming of the rain, and the crackle of the fire. Elizabeth and Derek spoke not at all. The latter, perceiving that some malign fate was apparently taking pleasure in wrecking all his hopes for the day, relapsed into silent sulkiness and sat gloomily turning over the pages of a magazine. There were many things that he wanted to say, but he felt incapable of saying them in Jerry's presence, which was curious, for hitherto he had been apt to despise Jerry.

Elizabeth was equally disinclined for conversation. Never during their engagement had Jerry puzzled her as he was puzzling her now. It was growing plain to her that there were more sides to his character than she had ever suspected, and she was not sure that she was glad of the discovery. There were other things, too, that gave her food for thought. She was gazing absently at his back and debating these and other matters in her mind, when he turned suddenly. She looked away quickly, angrily conscious that she had flushed when she met his glance.

"Well," said Jerry, "the day wears along. What about a small meal to lighten the tedium?"

"I'm not a bit hungry, thanks," said Elizabeth.

"But I am. And so is Derek. He's all hollow round the waist-line. It's nearly six, anyway."

"I think we'll be able to get away soon," said Elizabeth. "The wind seems to be dropping."

"Well, I'll take a look round," said Jerry. "But I fancy it's early yet to talk

about getting away." He slipped into his oilskin and went out.

As the door closed after him, Derek threw down his magazine and jumped to his feet. His handsome countenance bore the expression of one who finds himself out of sympathy with all mankind.

"What a ghastly day!" he said bitterly. "Of all the filthy luck! Finding *him* here, and then this——"

"It's no use grouching," said Elizabeth. "We can't help the weather, and—and nor can he. We must just make the best of it."

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, do be quiet!" said Elizabeth, with such unexpected sharpness that Derek's jaw dropped in astonishment. He fell back upon a wounded silence. Never before had Elizabeth spoken to him like that, and it hurt his self-esteem. The uneasy pause was broken by the opening of the door and the entry of Jerry.

"I'm sorry," said the latter, shedding his oilskin, "but you can't go yet. The rain's stopping, but the wind's as strong as ever. Besides—your boat's gone."

"Gone?" said Elizabeth, staring.

"What's that?" said Derek.

"The tide's taken it," said Jerry. "You left it on the beach, you know. I ought to have thought of that."

"Good Heavens!" said Derek feebly.

"But *you've* got a boat, haven't you?" asked Elizabeth.

"I had," said Jerry, "but she's gone, too. Wrenched her moorings. We're marooned here for the night, I'm afraid."

There was a stunned silence.

"Can't we signal or—or something?" said Elizabeth at length.

"You can't see the shore now for the mist, and it's getting dark fast. No, we're stuck. Old Joe Ripley's bringing me out some food and stuff early in the morning, and he'll take you off. Meanwhile we'll manage all right. You can have the bunk, Elizabeth, and I'll rig up a shelter on the verandah for Derek and myself. Now I'll rake up some supper."

He turned away and, opening a cupboard, peered earnestly into its sinister depths. Elizabeth looked rather blankly at Derek; Derek, his mouth open in complete stupefaction, stared blankly back. Then, as if by mutual consent, they sank back into their chairs again. There was obviously nothing to be done; there seemed hardly more that could be said.

They were not, as it chanced, vouchsafed

an opportunity of saying anything, for Jerry maintained a bright flow of small-talk on a variety of subjects while he made ready the meal.

"Dashed sudden affairs, these storms. We had one when I was here last year that went on for three days and nearly starved me. But this is blowing itself out now, I think. . . . Hope you like stew, Elizabeth. That's the only thing I've got enough of at the moment. It's a pity the island wasn't at its best for you to-day. It's a little Elysium as a rule. By the way, do you know what the local peasantry call it? You'll never hear its map-name mentioned round these parts. They call it 'Try-Again Island,' because at certain tides it's the dickens of a job to get round it from seaward. You get carried back time after time. Devilish queer currents round here. . . . Potatoes in their skins, I think, to save time. . . ."

Throughout this monologue his guests uttered no word. Derek, whom this final catastrophe had deprived of speech, stared glumly at the fire; Elizabeth watched Jerry as he moved briskly from cupboard to table, from table to oil-stove. And as she watched she was strangely aware that old impressions were shifting and dying in her mind, and that new ones were rising in their stead. This deft, quick-moving person bore no resemblance to the blunderer whose gaucheries in drawing-rooms had caused her such annoyance. This new Jerry went about his culinary duties with a smooth, unhurried efficiency that eliminated all unnecessary effort. The room was small and somewhat crowded, but he knocked nothing over; there was apparent no trace of that clumsiness which had diverted Elizabeth's friends. He worked neatly and fast, juggling with plates, stirring saucepans, cutting bread and all the time talking cheerfully of this and that. It was, curiously enough, Elizabeth and Derek who felt in the way, the former especially, for she knew that she could not have done so well what Jerry was doing now. Neither offered assistance, for it was abundantly evident that Jerry needed none.

"Ready," he announced suddenly. "Come and eat."

As they rose to obey, Derek, as if to lend additional complexity to the thoughts stirring in Elizabeth's mind, knocked his chair over with a crash, and, stooping to retrieve it, swept a tin plate from the table to a corner. . . .

Supper was a curious meal. At first silence hung over the trio. Just as Elizabeth had been unwilling to shelter beneath Jerry's roof, so she was now unwilling to eat his food; but this reluctance died a natural death as she discovered in turn (a) that she was really very hungry, and (b) that Jerry's cooking was as good as his dancing was not. The stew was superb, the coffee of a kind to draw praise from a Frenchwoman. Derek, who was hungrier than Elizabeth, thawed more rapidly, for the male of the species reacts more readily than the female to the stimulus of good food. As he ate, gloom faded from Derek's brow, to give place to something not far removed from content. He looked across at Jerry with an air almost of comradeship.

"By Jove," said Derek, "this is jolly good, what?"

"Well," returned Jerry modestly, "I can look after myself, though I say it." He paused. "Some can do one thing, some another," he added. Elizabeth, glancing up, surprised a gleam in his eye that caused her to look down hurriedly at her plate.

When even Derek could eat no more, Jerry rose and began to gather up the dishes. Elizabeth watched him while dignity and inclination fought together in her mind; suddenly dignity threw up the sponge, and she stepped forward.

"I'll help you with that," she said.

Jerry turned and surveyed her for a moment in silence. "No, you won't," he said. "Thanks, all the same. It's my bungalow, my crockery, and my job."

"All right," said Elizabeth, after a little pause. "Then I shall go for a walk." She turned away, picked up an oilskin, waved back Derek, who seemed desirous of accompanying her, and stepped out of the hut.

The storm had passed, leaving a moaning wind and a sullen sky to mark its going. It was almost dark now, and the mainland was invisible. Elizabeth crossed the wet dunes to the beach and walked rapidly towards the clump of trees. She felt the need of solitude, for there were many things that she wanted to think out. She passed the trees and continued her way along the other side of the island, walking thoughtfully, a frown between her brows. The beach here rose into a kind of immature bluff, some six feet high, at whose base little waves were lashing fretfully. Elizabeth, reaching a point immediately behind the bungalow, halted and stood looking out to sea.



" 'Some can do one thing, some another,' " she said aloud. " I wonder——" She broke off suddenly. Fifty yards from the shore her eye had encountered a dark, shapeless mass upon the water; for a moment she stared at it wonderingly, and then started as she grasped its import. " Oh ! " she said. " Well, of all the——"

A sound behind her swung her about, to perceive, hastening towards her through the growing darkness, the tall figure of Derek, plainly bent upon a last effort to turn this day to good account. Elizabeth observed him without enthusiasm; the feeling was growing upon her—unreasonably, perhaps—that Derek did not emerge with credit from this adventure. His conduct throughout had been, if not actually uncouth, at least puerile. Instinctively she drew back a step, and as she did so the ground, loosened by the rain, gave way beneath her feet. She fought wildly to retain her balance, failed, and fell headlong. . . .

Her first thought as she struck the water was that here was merely one more unsatisfactory incident in a thoroughly unsatisfactory day. As she jerked the water from her eyes and prepared to wade ashore, it occurred to her to wonder if Jerry had any more clothes to spare. And then suddenly panic took her. For her foot, groping for foothold, touched bottom, felt that it sloped steeply, and thereafter could not touch it again. She was out of her depth.

Fear had no great part in Elizabeth's make-up, but she was frightened now. She could swim moderately, but her best efforts now availed her nothing. The tide was running out fast, and one of the peculiar currents that gave the island its nickname had her in its grip. Elizabeth, fighting gallantly, felt rather than saw the shore recede from her, and summoned her strength to cry for help.

" Jerry ! " she called frantically. " Oh, Jerry ! "

Which would doubtless have interested a psychologist, had one been present. For Elizabeth knew that Derek was within earshot and that he swam expertly; whereas Jerry was not in sight, and Elizabeth did not know if he could swim or not. Elizabeth, however, was not thinking about psychology and had quite forgotten Derek.

The latter, as it happened, was at the moment running to and fro upon the shore in an aimless sort of way, uttering little yelping cries and making futile gestures with his hands.

Elizabeth, desperately treading water, put her whole soul into a last effort.

" Jerry ! Jerry ! "

Derek, hearing, paused again uncertainly and peered out into the darkness. He took a step forward, halted irresolutely, shivered, turned abruptly and bolted for the bungalow. He had covered but a dozen yards when he cannoned violently into a tall figure that was hurrying towards him.

" What was that ? " said Jerry's voice harshly.

" Elizabeth ! " gasped Derek. " Out there—she fell in—I——"

But Jerry was gone. Elizabeth, now well-nigh exhausted, dimly saw someone leap into view and heard a voice.

" Elizabeth, where are you ? "

" Here, Jerry ! Be quick ! "

The figure stepped back, seemed to hang for an instant upon the little bluff, and hurtled through the air towards her. There was a fierce commotion in the water at her side, and then Jerry's arm was about her and his voice in her ear.

" Lie quiet, sweetheart. It's all right now."

And that was all, until, after what seemed an eternity, she felt solid ground beneath her feet. Then Jerry's arm tightened about her till it almost hurt.

" Oh, Elizabeth ! " he said.

Elizabeth achieved a tremulous little laugh. " I'm using up all your dry clothes, Jerry, dear," she said. And presently, as they climbed the beach towards the bungalow : " Jerry, you told us a lie about those boats."

Jerry started slightly, but he did not relax his grip. " You spotted 'em, then ? Well, you see, I didn't want you to go till I'd had a chance to—well, anyway, I didn't want you to go. So I took the boats round to the back of the bungalow and let 'em drift out on a long rope. It was really my fault that you were nearly drowned, Elizabeth."

" I'm glad," said Elizabeth slowly, " because I've changed my mind about a lot of things to-day. But until I saw the boats there I wasn't sure if—if you wanted me to change it." She paused. " 'Try-Again Island,' " she said gravely. " It's a good name for it. Shall—shall we, Jerry ? "

Jerry stopped suddenly and picked her up bodily in his arms as if she had been a small child. Carrying her thus, he resumed his progress.

" You bet we will ! " he said



"When I bring her back, back to her own home, if I find any of your jackals on the place, they'd better take care of their skins!"

# THE TERRIBLE FRIEND

By MICHAEL KENT

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

**T**HERE is a kind of man who will see his whole team dead to carry out his contract. I say team because such men are all captains. You will have read of their type—Grenville with his "Fight on!" when thirty only out of his hundred men were left in a case to work ship, and the fresh unblooded galleons bore down; Columbus, Beckett, Scott, Leonidas at the furnace doors of Sparta before the millions of the East.

So was Aubrey Stanhope, a man slow to take up any course, very fair and just to all who served him on ordinary occasions, but by no means to be turned from a path once set on, though earth should melt. It really does not matter that he was a photo-

play producer. Such folk see visions, and to make those visions real spare neither themselves, nor others, any sweat or pain. That way the world comes to works that gladden and inspire.

But "Picture play!" say you, and think of custard tarts. Well, won't true stuff on a strip of celluloid move the heart and tauten humanity's flag halyards as well as a sermon? True stuff's true any way you look at it.

Come back, then, to Aubrey, in a sports coat and a battered hat, with pyjamas and a change of socks slung behind his shoulder-blades, and an ashplant to wave when speech was eager, raking East Brantshire for pictures to make. He was poet, a

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bit of a painter, scenario writer, producer, and, altogether, one big man.

He'd got Bob Wainwright with him and a movie camera just to pick up stuff for experimental backgrounds, and they foot-slogged it every inch, because you can't see a country if you wend through it at more than four miles an hour. They lounged in bar parlours and market places and on the gates of fields where labour was afoot and sweating, to hear folk talk.

"The brown earth's pulse," quoth Aubrey. "Who can portray life and never touch it? I've not that imagination, Bob." That was at the top of Denne Hill, where the hop gardens begin.

Bob grinned, looking along the road. "Pulse of brown earth," said he. "Here's the great-grandmother of all brown earth coming towards us, Boss. What do you make of her?"

She'd got a little close-fitting bonnet on, with a crinkly muslin edge to it like the one in pictures of Mary Queen of Scots, and below she was wrinkled like a contour map. Out of that network of crossing lines came just the little round cheek-points and bright eyes sunk cavernous with watchfulness, the patient brave wakefulness of very old people who seem ever on guard against a foe who's bound to catch them in the end. Something black she wore, with a sort of brown plaid fichu thing around her neck brought pointed to her waist. Her arms splayed on elbows tired of elbowing as she made her way with the help of a brown oak crook under arthritic knuckles to stay knees that had done with leaping long ago. She bore a basket in the other hand.

The Boss went to her as she set down her burden at the paling of a garden end and made to free the latch of a wicket.

"Good day to you, mother," said he, swinging the gate for her. "You have been far afield for an old lady."

"Oh, I fare hearty," she returned, with just a note of defiance in her piping voice. "I fare main and hearty, kind sir."

She passed in nodding on her stick, while the Boss, without knowing why, sought some excuse to stand by. There seemed so little one could ask of her. A drink came into his mind at the end.

"A cup of water, mother," he said, "have you got such a thing? My friend and I have been long on the road."

"Surely." She turned sharp with a bright jerk of the old head, for giving was a gladness time and hard times had

taken away. "Come you in, sirs, come you in."

They found themselves in a little house-place paved in brick that frost and wear had eaten scarlet in the treads. There were windows on three sides, and it was uncommonly light for a cottage. Here and there about the room were the treasures, the strong links of life that made it worth the old soul's while to fight her fight as long as she might, to have earth for path and not for coverlet—geraniums, old wooded and slow blossoming, against the window-pane; old rag rugs on the brickwork, made from clothes that she had walked gay in when all her world was gay; impossible waxen fruit beneath a hemisphere of glass; the sampler. The Boss took up the sampler from the little side-table when the old woman stumped out to get the water.

Mary Boughten, in the year of Our Lord 1858 and the tenth year of her own age, had returned staid thanks for a wise upbringing:

Now thank I here  
That parents dear  
Taught me to sew and pray,  
For industrie  
And honestie  
Keep want and woe away.

A cross-stitched farm with Noah's ark-like trees was offered in proof of industry.

He put the square of frail old canvas down as a stick tap-tapped upon the brickwork and a strained ivory knuckle shone tremulous against the shadow of the inner door.

"Here I be, masters," said she proudly. "I ain't a-kep' you long a-waitin' now, have I?" She set the jug upon the grey scrubbed oak and turned to fetch two cow-horn cups from the mantel.

As they drank they could watch the life inexorably ticking away in her temporal arteries.

"Thank you, mother," said Bob Wainwright, setting down his cup. "I expect it keeps you pretty busy looking after this place. There's a lot to do."

"Oh," said she brightly, "I keep a-going." When she smiled, the leanness of her face, the bright eyes, and the red apple colour of her cheeks lent her something strangely girlish, as if Mary Boughten aged ten looked out on them in the sure trust of kind life in honesty and industry to come, while—God help her!—here were want and woe plain at her bony elbows. "I go to fetch my Old Age at the post office every week. I keep a-going, mister."

Bob shook his head. He's just one of

these ordinary chaps who only sees what his eyes show him. "I should have thought this place was more than you could manage."

The grey embers of her heart flamed fierce at that. "You're from the guardians," she accused angrily, "pokin' and pryin'! They ain't a-goin' to take me up hill. My well's good enough for me!" She turned to the Boss querulously, for life was not strong enough in her to support her anger long. "Now you've tasted it, you know, doctor. There ain't better water in all Denne. Guardians says there's critters in it." She grew pleading. "There ain't no critters in it, not to speak of, is there, doctor? You'll never turn me out an' take me off up hill to die? An' the roof's all right, too; the gutters on'y want a poke to clear 'em. The water don't come in so's you'd notice it, but I ain't had ne'er a moment to mount a ladder yet. You up an' tell the guardians that."

Storm drained suddenly out of her. The ghost of the girl faded, her eyes grew dull. The tired lips bagged and dropped, leaving an old, old woman.

The Boss put a hand upon the stringy wrist, slashed violet with the lazy ebb of life. "I'm not a doctor," he said softly, "and my friend has naught to do with guardians. He's a good chap, and we'll clear your gutters for you, mother, if you'll let us. Don't take on." Without knowing it, he had slipped into her own way of speech. That was like the Boss.

The old woman's fear passed swiftly. "Now the sparrows has their broods away," said she, "I'd be beholden. 'Twere a shame to touch 'em before. Pity if young 'uns can't have their time. I love to hear them sparrows screech."

So in the sunny afternoon those two got the moss and the empty nests out of the gutters, and made a joyous job of it. She sent them off each with a posy of sweet-williams proudly. "I can still fare to offer some 'at to a friend."

Even then she didn't know that the Boss's Treasury note lay under the sampler to help make the last line of the poetry seem true. It must have been quite a glad day for Mary.

At "The Fox and Hounds" they learned more of her. Landlord Stebbins was a guardian himself, and Mary was a nuisance. He rattled off Ministry of Health regulations about cubic feet and other things even less romantic. She couldn't afford to keep the

well clean, and sure enough it was full of typhoid. (Bob ordered two double brandies with astonishing alacrity.) Mrs. Harnden her name was. She'd married Tom Harnden, and he'd been dead more years than one could tell. Farmer Cladish owned her piece. He'd never turn her out, but he couldn't do naught by way of repairs. Cladish weren't none too bloomin' himself. Still, Government did say that her place weren't fit to live in, and they'd pack her off up hill to the Union. She couldn't get much out of life, anyway.

"Except," said the Boss absently, "to hear the sparrows call."

Mr. Stebbins laughed. Gentlemen will have their joke!

On the road again, the Boss waved his stick forward as if it were a sword. His lips were tight pressed, and a double furrow slit his forehead. Bob, knowing the signs, eased the leather straps of his camera. They did the first mile in fourteen minutes, the second in twelve. At the end of an hour the Boss turned furiously. Bob was two hundred yards behind.

"Come on!" cried Aubrey Stanhope. "Why the devil are you lingering and loitering along like that, when I've got the greatest story that has ever been put on the screen?"

A nightmare followed. They tore into Paston, and the Boss took a sitting-room and two bedrooms without looking at them. While Bob went out to hunt typist stenographers, Aubrey sat on a bed and scribbled bits of a scenario on backs of envelopes in a white-hot fever to create.

At half-past eleven the mother of one typist was shown indignant into the sitting-room, where the Boss ramped on a litter of loose sheets, white-faced, his stiff arms socketed in trouser pockets, seeing nothing but the pictures in his brain while a scared stenographer waited on his word. Bob, in stockinged feet, running a sort of amateur coffee-stall, was creeping about with cups in favourable intervals.

"Scene twenty-six—the door of the cottage from within. It is opened and swung into the room, showing a broken latch. Very slowly round the upright come the stick and the bony knuckles of the old woman about to enter. They draw nearer, showing a skinny forearm. End of scene. Send that woman away, Wainwright. Beginning of scene twenty-seven——"

Bob had a big contract, the same being to persuade Mrs. Somebody, whose name he

had never heard, that nothing worse than a little overtime was happening to her Gladys. He had to ask her in, give her a cup of coffee, and offer her a couple of pounds a night as paid chaperon to her own daughter.

When it was over, which was after the blinds were drawn up, the Boss sent his auxiliary staff to sleep in the beds Bob and he had hired for themselves, and made do with the sitting-room sofa.

"It's the right stuff this time, Bob," he said, when he awoke at eleven in the morning. "Humanity will sit up and listen to you and me!" That "you and me" paid Bob for a lot of discomfort.

The auxiliary staff went away rejoicing in Treasury notes. Mrs. Somebody, indeed, threw out a strong hint that her Gladys would consider a permanent engagement, but Aubrey Stanhope was hot-foot for Town.

## II.

THERE'S no saying when the Boss got bitten with the big idea. Old Mary Harnden had certainly given him the story, but he had not thought of working it as he afterwards did, when he slammed down that scenario at Paston. He was always full of intolerances—the one dynamic failing that gets things done—and something about one of the early scenes got him raving. A romantic stage-manager had supplied him with a cottage that had a porch and rambler roses. The Boss wanted scarlet ruiner beans and a water-butt.

"I'm not out after photo-play realities," said he. "I'm for the thing itself."

I think that phrase must have settled it. After all, the canons of Art and the rules of evidence have much in common. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," quit, that is, of the unessential.

Stella Mazarin remonstrated. No one else had the nerve, but he'd have given his eyes for Stella. "The public," said she, "wants convention. They understand it; it doesn't worry them."

"Star," said he, "I'd rather do a small thing perfectly than a big thing very well indeed. We'll scrap all this."

You saw the man in that. Not one, perhaps, in a thousand would appreciate the infinite strain of the infinitesimal difference between "perfect" and "very well indeed," but perfection was a thing he worshipped. "That's why I have never loved anyone but you, Star," he put it. What can human girl say to that?

So he lifted the whole fit-up, lock, stock, barrel and tripod, to Bishopstone and set his camera-men to the job of getting stage effects out of the undiluted light of the sun from faces free of make-up. It was one big contract.

Mind you, we didn't even know the story. That was another whim of his. "In life you only see things as they come. That's the thing that ruins movie art, knowing the triumphant end of a story when the whole dramatic force of its climax depends on the fact that there may never be a triumphant end at all. Perhaps there won't be here," he added gloomily.

We got the yarn in snippets. The girl, that was Star, had by an accident destroyed the masterpiece that was to bring her artist lover fame, and had fled, despairing. That's where Mary Harnden came in. Star had to arrive footsore and hopeless, without even the thin thread of copper currency that ties body and soul together, at Mary's cottage. The Boss made her go through it, tramping nearly twenty miles through the forenoon on a roll and coffee breakfast. "And if you can't persuade the old woman to take you in and give you house-room, you're not big enough for the part." There was challenge.

Star turned up at mid-day without need to set untired shoulders to a faked droop, or tell herself that the world could be a hard place. It was hard that day equally to heart and foot-soles. Star did not care whether hidden lenses "shot" her painful way over the pebbles from the wicket to the cottage door. What did it matter? Aubrey could set her to do a thing like this.

Old Mary came to the door. "Dear heart alive," quavered she, "you be ill, missy!"

It had been Star's fear down all the long road that she might not have heart enough to cheat the poor old soul to pity and so fulfil the will of the hard man whom she loved.

"Only a little hungry," she said. "Have you—"

"Come you in," broke in the old woman. "Grief ain't for one so young and comely. Come you in, poor soul."

The hidden batteries closed up with every last word in lens and super-sensitive film, to mark their actions unforeseen.

"It don't seem decent," said Bob Wainwright, who had been in position to "shoot" the old girl as she had wound up the bucket of the well, pausing for breath and starting bravely on.

And here's the queer thing that when you come to think of it, we think of these derelict country folk as something rather cowl-like, slow in the uptake, certainly not over-ready with sympathy or quick to understand. Mary was as swift in her finding of Star Mazarin's trouble as if she'd been psycho-analysing all her life. She wept with the girl over her false story of unreal distress, wept and comforted.

I put that to the Boss when it was all over. "If the old girl had been a little harder," said I, "she'd have let Miss Star rest half an hour and sent her on. You'd have fallen down."

"There's a theory," he replied cynically, "that folk who go shabby are fools or rogues. It's fallacy. Sometimes they are the saints of the earth. Put your money on that; you'll be surprised how often you pick a winner. And that's the stuff for the screen, my son."

You'd have said it was all one to him, fool, rogue, or saint, so long as he got his picture. But there, I'm not out to make an illustrated interview of the heart of Aubrey Stanhope. I'm trying to tell a rather tangled story straightway round. Leave the rest to his biographer. But it did seem then that he saw goodness and self-sacrifice just as quaint phenomena worth recording.

He recorded them all right. For close on a week there were a dozen men in hiding, rain or shine, aiming at that cottage with telephoto lenses and what-not. One of the boys got it across that he was a road surveyor and the apparatus was a theodolite. That was an inspiration, for he hadn't to hide up trees or behind hedges like the rest of us. Fortunately the weather was good, and we got a lot of the right stuff outside. We had to cut out interiors.

You'll understand Mary Harnden took Star in and rested her, shared the hard bed with her where she had been wont to lie lonely, shared the bread and dripping and tea-dust with her, shared all her "Old Age from the post office."

But the Boss heard about that when he met Star at the corner of the hop gardens, slipping away at twilight for instructions.

"It's cruel," she said, "making the old soul go without. I won't go on, Aubrey. She doesn't get enough to eat."

He jeered. "Star," he said, "the firefly of the screen world, lady of easy living and tender fare! You'll have enough to eat when this is over, and the old thing loves mothering. Why worry, Star?"

His gibe was true enough, and so it bit the more. When a girl's face and a bit of sham emotion bring the fervent admiration of mankind old and young, it's hard to run away from the "eat, drink, and be merry" system of philosophy.

"I'm thinking of her," she said. "She's such a dear, Aubrey, and you--you are sacrificing her to your love of fame."

"It isn't fame." He turned sharp on her. "It isn't success. It isn't even you, though, Heaven knows, I want you madly, Star. It's just getting a good thing done as well as it can be done."

And that, after all, is pretty well, as ethics go. If everyone did it now, from king to crossing sweeper, who'd want battle-ships, or Houses of Commons, or the Court of King's Bench? But the reel's off the sprockets; let's get back.

"I've a good mind to throw my hand in," she said.

"And drop good money," he returned.

That ended it. Though Star drew good money, she spent it quickly, and even to Star star parts were not too plentiful. Besides that, whatsoever insincerities she may have had then, she loved Aubrey Stanhope, which is a puzzle I can't explain; but I know the truth of it. I know it can be so.

As I said, we never knew from day to day which way the story would jump, and for a week we had just been picking up what pictures came handy, when something happened which none of us reckoned with. We had very special instructions this day to shoot everything on sight.

It was about mid-morning when two men drove up in a sort of wagonette business, and one got down and knocked at the cottage door. "Mrs. Harnden," he said, "we've come to fetch you."

"Wh-what?" she gaped. "Fetch me? Where?"

He tried to look masterful and reassuring. "Where you'll be a long sight more comfortable, mother, than what you are here," he said.

"Up hill?" She only framed the words, for she couldn't speak them.

"You're about right, mother."

"But," said she, "I never heard naught."

"You had the notices," he said. "Nothing's been done to the well or the roof." He went on to other details. "You'll be very comfortable where you're going, mother."

"Ah, yes," said she, "I reckon I'll be awful comfortable where I'm a-goin'."

I don't think she meant what he meant.

Her face was creamy white, like old ivory, and the mouth tight-closed, drawn in over

taken her in his arms like a child to the cart.

"And nothing to fret about," said he cheerfully, "everything provided."



"'I'd lieve keep this. What are you a-goin' to do with the rest?'"

her gums. She nodded on her stick, so frail that this man might well have

"Nothin' to fret about," repeated she, standing straighter than you would think

she could, and looking over the man's shoulder at the dead gone years. "On'y"—she gave a little cast back with her free hand at the house behind, where all her common little life had gone—"I'd as lief cross this threshold feet to'most."

"Rubbidge!" said the guardians' man heartily. "You'll say different in a week." He paused a moment and looked round uneasily. "Maybe there's some bits of things you'll be fain to take."

She nodded at that and went back into the house, tapping on the bricks. But, bless you, what things she was fain to take were all before her

nicked the twenty inches of their son before the Great Harvester garnered him. She couldn't take the worn patch on the oldest rug, two furrows where cradle rockers had run, nor the bare-topped table-board, pockmarked with use in half a hundred

kindly feasts with friends and neighbours before the lean days set in. She could not take the reputation of upstandingness and independence, for she was given over by Time to



"Ah, mother, that ain't for me to say."

eyes. She couldn't take the notch on the kitchen door-post where her man had

a shameful surrender. The place was like a book written in a character of which



she only had the key. And the kind ghosts of seventy years crept out to comfort and condole. "Hail and farewell, Mary Harnden!"

Then, like ironic eyes of fate that know no turning from their law, the cameras sneaked up to the open windows, masked behind the flower pots, and winked and wrote their tale.

She came out at last, carrying only that absurd glass-covered dish of waxen fruit. "My Tom," she quavered, half defiantly, "he wrestled with a bear up at Bishopstone Fair, 'e did. They give 'im this for prize, an' I was there to see. I'd lieve keep this. What are you a-goin' to do with the rest?"

"Ah, mother," said the man, "that ain't for me to say."

These close-ups with a quart of glycerine tears are all pure eyewash! I knew that then, whatever I might have thought before. Just size it up and you'll see, sure enough, that the best part of the old woman, all that for the little remnant of her life could be a joy to her at all, was being sawn off slow—as a surgeon might take off a leg without a dope to deaden it—and her eyes were dry. Perhaps she'd wept all the tears she'd had for other folk. It's like enough, God knows.

I saw her as she sat in the wagonette with eyes steadfast on the chimneys chequered in blood where rain had eaten through the whitewash. She'd got the wax fruit on her lap, like one of those everlasting wreaths, and she looked out tense and watchful, as though she waited someone who would steal on her unawares. But I reckon now she'd greet him as a friend—the Terrible Friend who brings forgetting.

She put a hand on the man's arm before she climbed into the cart, and "Don't go through the village," she appealed.

I'd got a queer fancy as though the life were running out of her, and when, down the long road, she lost sight of the white chimney-stacks, eaten rosy by the years, breath would stop.

But there was no time to watch the wagonette that far, for things began to happen pretty much in a rush.

According to instructions, Miss Star had taken her farewell of the old dame the afternoon before. She had heard of the chance of a job, or so the story went. She was carrying out the Boss's orders when she came up the garden path not ten minutes after the guardians' men had gone. The Boss was standing there. The cottage door was closed, which was unusual, and the girl

seemed to jump to a sense of something wrong.

"Where's Granny?" she asked quickly. "What trick have you been playing on Granny, Aubrey?"

"Don't worry," returned the Boss casually. "The relieving officer sent men to cart her off to the workhouse."

My word! He put his finger on a live wire that trip.

"Workhouse!" she cried.

The Boss grinned. "It's what I said, my dear. We don't want her any more."

"Aubrey Stanhope," said she, "I'm through. I've done with you for good and all. You're not a man," she said. "You're a shark, a cold-blooded fish with the face of an angel and a devil's brains. That poor old thing!"

She didn't throw back her head and squeeze tears out, with her cheeks held up to show 'em glistening, but up they sprang all at once, and she didn't know it, sprang so that she was only fiercely angry that they hindered what she had to say. "I don't care about your picture, or your aims, or what you feel or think about me. Somewhere I'll find a job to do that isn't paid with old folks' blood. Your picture can go to hell, Aubrey Stanhope! I'm going to fetch Mary back."

"She's lost nothing," he protested. "If I hadn't fixed it with the guardians, she'd have gone a month ago. She can't complain."

But Heavens! argument was no use.

Star opened her dress and snapped open a string of pearls that she had worn beneath it. "Your property," said she. "They'd fester where they lie." They might have been twopenny beads out of a Christmas cracker. I never thought to see Star Mazarin do a thing like that.

"And listen," she went on, "when I bring her back, back to her own home, if I find any of your jackals on the place, they'd better take care of their skins!" With that she tore out, up road after the wagonette.

The Boss stood there somehow thin and wavering, like a windswept scarecrow, and his face was bleak and white. From where I worked through a knothole in the wall of a weather-boarded cartshed the other side of the hedge I saw him.

"I hope to Heaven the boys keep turning!" muttered the Boss.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denne Workhouse lies close on five miles over the hill, and, lucky for Miss Star, the

horse walked all the way. The driver said it was lame. Reckon he'd seen the Boss! It was an hour and a half before they got back. Don't ask me how she got that driver to turn round. I've tried saying "Must obey instructions, miss," to Star Mazarin myself.

All her young life blazed about her as she helped the old dame down, almost as though you could see it like a warm cloak to shelter and protect.

"They sha'n't take you off, Granny," she was assuring her. "I've deceived you. I'm not as poor as I made out. We can manage to do what the Government ask. We'll get it done somehow, don't you fret."

Mary Harnden stood fluttering in the porch. "Have they," she asked, not daring to enter, "have they cleared—it—all away?"

But the door opened from within. The Boss stood there. The kitchen doorway, leading from the sitting-room, had been boarded up, and from a slit which no one would notice in that emotional atmosphere we were able to get the interior for the first time. At a table before a sheet of parchment sat a Bishopstone solicitor.

"There's been a mistake, Mrs. Harnden," said the Boss.

"There has," agreed Star bitterly. "You forced an entry into a house that isn't yours. You'll pay for that!"

"At present," snapped the Boss, "it is mine. You're too quick, my dear. I bought it from Cladish a week ago, but if Mrs. Harnden will put her hand to this deed of gift, it is hers for good and all."

"Mine!" cried Mary. "And ne'er a shillin' for rent?" The sudden flicker in the old eyes died. "But there, I can't do what the Government says."

"No need," said the Boss, and all the frozen razor edge stripped off his voice. "You didn't know it, mother, but you've helped me make some very beautiful pictures, so I've been—improving the property while you were away. The water people are laying a pipe from the road. I've a tiler ready to go on the roof when you give the word, and the well will be cleaned as soon as you have the company's water to carry on with. And—those pictures are going to be very profitable to me. There's no

need now for you to fetch your Old Age from the post office; a fatter Old Age will come by post for you on the first of every month."

"Gammon!" said Mary, and looked at Star hopelessly with pathetic, questioning fatigue. "'Tain't kind to serve a poor old woman so."

The lawyer tapped his paper. "It's all provided in the deed, if you'll sign, ma'am."

But Star had seen the face of the Boss. "It's all right, Granny," she said; "don't fear. It's all right."

"But—I ain't done nothin'," quavered Mary.

The Boss took her elbow and sat her at the table. "You've let me make a picture of a dear, good woman," he explained.

"Have you?" asked Mary Harnden, greatly puzzled. "Who?"

But that isn't quite all. When she had put her name a-scrawl across the parchment, she turned happy to the girl. "Whatever can we do for the kindly gentleman, my dear?"

"Shall we say we are very sorry we distrusted him before?" asked Star wistfully. "Very sorry and——"

"Sorry?" said the Boss. "If you hadn't been the girl I took you for, you'd not have torn your contract up this morning, and so I'd never have got my picture at all. Sorry, Star? Wainwright, stop turning in the kitchen. There's something going to happen now that I don't want shot."

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, there it is. The film rocketed straight into fame from its release a year later. As the Boss said, he's paying far less for the star turn in "The Terrible Friend" than if he'd engaged one of the profession.

"And you stretched a soul on the rack," said I to tease him.

"She'd have been on the rack sooner and longer if I hadn't," he returned. "And think, there's five hundred million people will see that picture and be the better for it. Mary Harnden's made a kinder world. It's worth suffering for."

He switched off suddenly. "You must come home and see my youngster, Bob. He grows more like his mother every day."



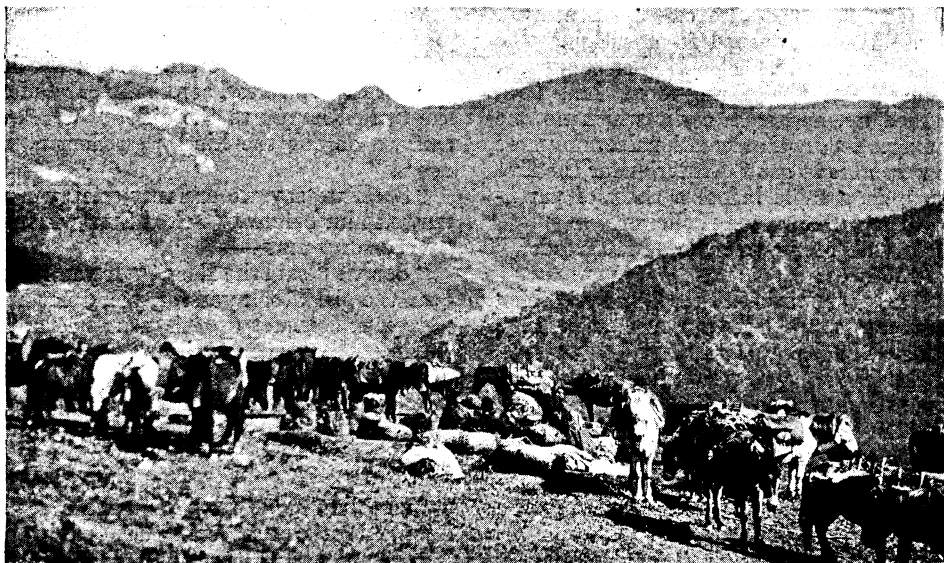
# FROM CHINA TO HKAMTI LONG

By F. KINGDON WARD, F.R.G.S.

**T**HERE was excitement in the air. A grey uniformed soldier appeared, running down the steep path, and the caravan slowed to a halt. The lagging muleteers, startled to life, rushed forward to where a party of coolies stood, peering

encountering these pests. They hold up caravans, loot the merchandise, and drive off the mules. When party strife breaks out between candidates for power, they turn soldier.

Five miles from the city we halted. The



THE CARAVAN PREPARING TO START.

across the bare tumoled hills; the soldier halted and cursed fluently. We followed the direction of their gaze and made out a cloud of dust disappearing over the next ridge. A man carrying the mail shuffled by at a half trot; at the first sign of trouble he would certainly cast his bags into the nearest ditch and cut. "What's the matter?" I asked, bewildered at this sudden explosion of activity on a much-used highway.

"Brigands!" said one of the gathering crowd shortly. A down-coming caravan had halted also, and instantly became fluent. It is impossible to travel any of the high-roads of Western China to-day without

mules were unloaded, and coolies hired to carry my boxes the remaining distance. "The magistrate is commandeering pack-mules," explained my head muleteer. "They are sending an expedition to retake Chung-tien from the Tibetans."

But when a week later we approached the last town in China, we met the garrison straggling out across the landscape in mob formation, rifles slung anyhow, on mules, or carried in bundles by some, while others went unarmed. They were without rear or flank guards. Not only was the attack on the Tibetans cancelled; the garrison whose duty it was to watch the frontier, and guard the people against an oft-threatened attack,

were being marched down to the capital, 200 miles distant, to support the old Tschun by arms against the new one. That was a much more momentous duty.

But what of it? It was spring in Yunnan! The fragrance of bean-fields clogged the air, drowsy with the drone of bees. Flowers trimmed the path, and the slimy rice-fields, terraced down to the river, were fledged with malice green. The afternoon sun slanting through the pine forest striped the dusty hill with shadows which lengthened slowly. All was slumbrous and peaceful.

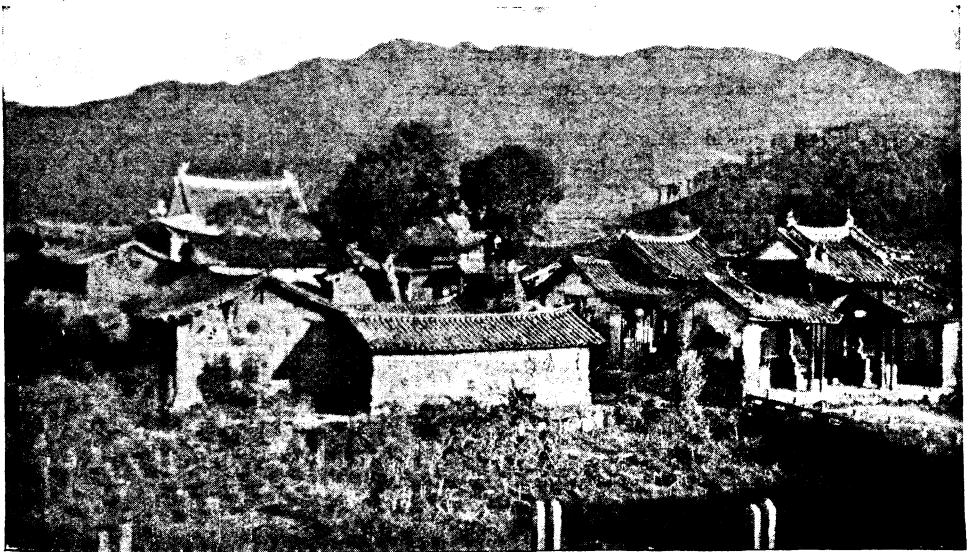
As, march by march, we left China further behind, the chances of a hold-up were considerably reduced. Unless the Tibetan tribes, into whose territory we were penetrating, turned against us, we were already out of danger; these byways are unprofitable for robbers—there are no caravans, neither is there population nor food. At length we stood on a high pass and, looking over the heads of the forest trees, saw the stark limestone ranges of Tibet splintering the sky. Billows of cloud seethed over the barrier. Two thousand feet below us the sacred lake gleamed like a sapphire in a blue china bowl.

And so we came to the monastery and entered the courtyard. Everybody bowed. "Welcome, Bimbo!" said a fat lama jovially, and burst into hearty laughter. Then he led me to the guest-room. It appeared that a deacon of the church was sick. Would I cure him? "The white men



A CHINESE JOSS-HOUSE ON THE CITY WALL.

are clever. We are poor folk, but such as we have we give you." (A goat bleated plaintively on the verandah.) I visited the



A CITY IN FAR WESTERN CHINA.

sick lama, and looked at his tongue and felt his pulse and gave him a thermometer to suck. He looked better already.

"Do you know what is the matter with him?" they asked eagerly.

I did not. "But," I replied loftily, "it is nothing."

"What is it called?" they asked, enchanted.

Tactless question! I frowned professionally. "We don't have that disease in our country. I will send him some medicine, and he will recover." Then I changed the topic.

I sent the poor old deacon some innocuous powder, with minute instructions, and he recovered in spite of it. Such is faith.

and I followed another. It is fatally easy to lose your transport in this tortured land. There was nothing for it but to stop at the first house. Three we tried, but no one would let us in. Good people do not travel after dark. Night birds must be birds of prey, and their only reply to our knocking was to pretend to be dead. At last we caught sight of a door ajar, and helped it open; the glow of a fire shone out on us, and we entered without ceremony, for we were numb with cold. But the old woman who was the only occupant drew back into the shadow, scared. Not even the production of money, and obvious signs indicating hunger, would induce her to minister to us. To everything we said or did in dumb show she shook her head. "I don't understand," she wailed. So we went hungry.

Next day we rejoined the caravan, which had taken refuge in the monastery. The monks gave me quarters, and we rested a day; there was a fearful climb ahead.

Having started again, we climbed for many hours, camping in the forest; and the following day also. In the afternoon we were on the plateau, at 15,000 feet. The wind



FERRYING OVER A RIVER IN YUNNAN.

From the fringes of the marches we turned westwards to the River of Golden Sand. As is the custom in this country, our loads were now carried from village to village by mixed transport—yak, ponies, donkeys, men and women, whatever was available. Across the rhododendron moorland we floundered, knee-deep in a chromatic surf of flowers, till the deep dry canyon of the Yangtze hove in sight. Down we plunged madly into the bowels of the earth, where the raw river rumbles, and crossed obliquely in a barge.

An immense mountain range confronted us. The setting sun glittered on the golden domes of a white monastery perched on a spur, and thither we directed our march. But the transport took one road, while Lao-Wu

sang through the passes and dashed the rain in our faces; through the driving mist the snow-peaks loomed like phantoms. "Sir, I have a headache," said my head muleteer. "I cannot walk; I shall die." I gave him the spare mule. "Sir, I have a headache," said my cook. "I cannot walk; I am very ill; I cannot cook your supper." I gave him my own pony. And when, at dusk, we camped near a yak herder's encampment at the top of the pass, another man collapsed; so he went into the yak herder's tent, and lay down by the fire and refused to move. Moral: never take Chinamen into the Tibetan Marches.

However, on the following day we began to descend, and the sick showed signs of recovery. By evening we reached the

village of Atuntzu, a crescent of dust-coloured houses wedged into the apex of a stony valley. The steep cobbled alleys are ankle-deep in sludge. Dreadful smells emanate from the gutter.

Knots of Chinese soldiers lounge in the barrack square or penetrate the alleys. Oddly enough, numbers of Tibetan soldiers (you can tell them by their boots) are haggling with the shopkeepers. They are unarmed, of course. Still, it is a Gilbertian situation. A promise to wipe Atuntzu off the map arrives annually from some Tibetan tribe or other. But they are vastly polite. They always inform the people first that they are coming with fire and sword; several times they have very nearly done so.

But what a market town is this! We can buy nothing, for no merchant dares to hold any stock, and after a couple of nights we shake the mud and murk of Atuntzu from us, and go forth into the sweet Tibetan air.

From Atuntzu we turned south down the long winding valley which leads to the Mekong. Drier, stonier, and hotter it grows, till at last we debouch into the arid gorge of the Mekong itself. For three days we marched through the echoing gorges, balancing on the crazy cliff edge which calls itself a road, high above the bouncing water. Gradually vegetation increases, till at last the valley is well-wooded, and finally we cross the boisterous Mekong, sliding down the bamboo rope bridge.

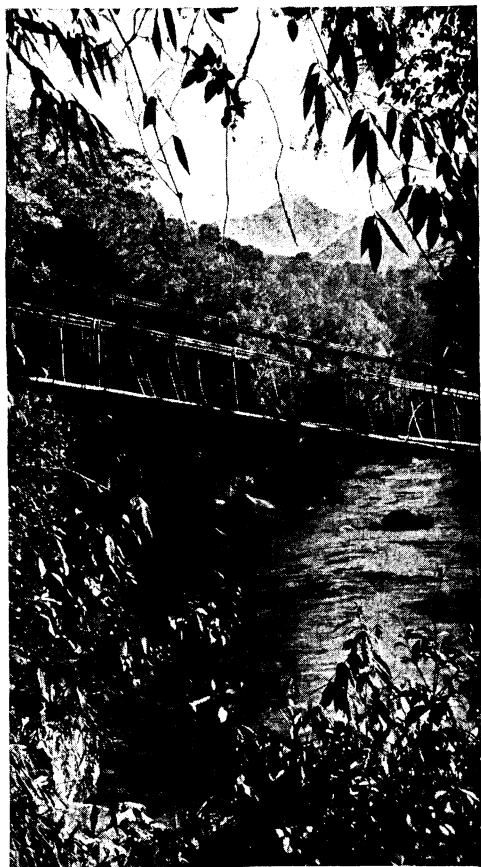
And now we must part with our mules. They can travel this road no further. Only men can cross the huge barrier before us—beyond which, only twenty miles distant, rumbles the Salween river—for the ways are steep now.

The heavy baggage is sent back by road with the mules. Tibetan porters are engaged—each will carry a forty-pound load—and our kit is reduced to essentials. Up through the coloured forest we climb, and out on to the bleak alpine slopes where the blue poppies grow (they are scattering their seeds now, though) up and up, till once more we are 14,000 feet above the sea. Far below us wriggles the Salween in a bed of green plush. A snow-peak glitters against the daffodil sky.

Then down we jog 5,000 feet into the moist warmth of the valley. The simple Lutzu, with their preposterous little cross-bows and inadequate homespun clothing, greet us amiably, for they are a simple folk, meek and kindly. The French have long

had a mission station here, and the priest gives me every assistance for the most difficult part of the long journey on which we are about to embark.

Not so the truculent Lisu tribe, who share with the Lutzu this poisonous valley. These hardy warriors, with their long knives, their five-foot span war bows (bend one if you can, reader—I cannot), and their unstable tempers, are particularly dangerous in their



A CANE BRIDGE OVER THE TAZU RIVER, HEAD-WATERS OF THE IRRRAWADDY.

cupps. They will fly into a rage for no reason, and then regrettable incidents are apt to occur.

Yet how daintily, if scantily, their women-folk dress! The short white pleated skirt and bodice set off the figure; the tiara, though of buttons and beads instead of diamonds, contrasts with their black locks; their rosy cheeks and round faces betoken a certain merriness of disposition; even their bare calves and ankles are not lacking

in grace. The men wear a long garment like a second-hand dressing-gown.

But we employ Lutz porters for the five days' march over the next range to the angry Taron river. It is cold now—late October—and though the almost ceaseless



A KACHIN WOMAN CARRYING FIREWOOD.

orchids, and creepers, and start the long steep climb up Monastery Mountain. That night we spend at a Lisu hut, the last habitation in the Salween valley. Again we toiled up through endless forests; familiar trees gave place to a tangle of rhododendron and silver fir. Then came a ghastly jumble of boulders flung angrily down chutes cut in the flanking cliffs and piled in confusion. Over these we climbed circumspectly, wading through the high wet meadows beyond, till the wind blew clean from the pass. We slept under rocks as big as cottages, and awoke at icy dawn shivering. Above us hung the glacier like a sword of Damocles poised on the brink of the cliff. On the fourth day after leaving the Salween we marched across the summit of the divide, hour after hour. At dusk we camped on a shelf of the cliff.

"Light the fire," I said to my man; "it is very cold here."

"Sir," he replied, "there is no firewood."

"Well, get some water; I am very thirsty."

"Sir, there is no water."

He seemed to take a malicious delight in telling me this. Had I not scouted his suggestion to camp at a reasonable place soon after noon? However, after a breakfastless start next day, we reached a gorgeous spot on the far flank of the range. Below us yawned the mile-deep trough of the Taron. An ocean of high tossed mountains beyond marked the uttermost confines of Burma, at the very sources of the Irrawaddy, and behind us Monastery Mountain gleamed like an iceberg in the winter sunshine. Then we threw ourselves down on the rhododendron carpet, 13,000 feet above the sea, and picnicked.

The descent to the Taron gorge was terrific. Hugging the cliffs, balancing on logs, letting ourselves down by roots and creepers or ascending by the same means, tripping and stumbling, at last we came down to the noisy river. Beautiful it was, with that ruthless beauty which commands attention. The misty water riots between cliffs fledged with green trees from which depend festoons of flowers. At last we meet with human beings again. There are no villages, only a hut here and there inhabited by the dwarf Nung.

Poor timid little folk! They have no clothes, save a rag round the loins, and a towel to cover their shoulders. Their legs and bodies, injured in the cruel jungle, are covered with hideous sores. The women,

rain of this dreadful region has stopped for a month, it will be bitter on the lofty passes. But the days are gilded with sunshine, and we take warm clothing for the long nights.

Crossing the Salween in primitive dug-out canoes, we presently pass through the marble gorge, draped with luxuriant ferns,



however, wear *their* towels as skirts, and tattoo their pinched faces with blue pocks.

Harried by their more powerful neighbours, stolen by the Tibetans for slaves, the Nung have buried themselves in these awful jungles, eking out a bare subsistence on measly crops and roots, and even on rats and mice. Sometimes they build their very huts in the tree-tops, instead of on the sheer sides of the mountain ranges. And so we came to the first Nung hut, and it was empty. We tried another, and that, too, was empty. Then some men came along and informed us that the "village" (the huts were not within shouting distance of one another) was deserted. There had been an epidemic in the neighbourhood, and the people had left everything and fled to the

pastime he looks exactly like a monkey. I had no difficulty, because a brawny Nung lugged me across attached to him by a rope like my own boxes. But, reader, do not you cross a "monkey" bridge without first being *tied* into your ring.

It was now necessary to change porters again. The Lutzus wished to return to their homes; unless they did so soon, they would not be able to do so for six months, so deep is the snow on these passes. Dwarf Nung were therefore hired for the next lap of the journey, a five days' march over the uninhabited range above us. The headman of one of the villages came and brought his wife with him, an ugly little creature of seventeen, with a mop of hair and a tattooed turnip of a face. An old man with much-



DOMED SHAN HUTS ON THE HKAMTI PLAIN.

mountains. It is their only weapon in the face of sickness—to fly.

We crossed the Taron by "monkey" bridge and camped on a sandbank. The "monkey" bridge consists of three or four ropes of twisted bamboo, each about the thickness of a skipping rope, fastened to trees on either bank. A large cane ring, threaded on these ropes, forms a sort of travelling cradle in which the victim seats himself and, lying down under the "bridge," he hauls and pushes himself across. It is hard work. It is better to cross at dawn, when the rope is wet with dew and the ring runs well. But the Nung is accustomed to it; his feet being bare, he is the better able to grip the rope with his toes and push hard, at the same time hauling himself along hand over hand. Indeed, engaged in this

creased skin came; a curly-haired youngster five feet high, but thewed and sinewed, came; and one or two others.

For the first three days we marched through the forest as usual, climbing up and down, but mostly up. The going was desperate—I could never have found the path alone. Then up through a deep slot in the cliffs, and over a wilderness of boulders to the harsh alps. Rain came, and turned to snow. We passed a horrid night under a boulder, the firewood drenched, the wind howling through the rocks, sweeping the rain in.

Next day, after a bitter struggle up the scree, we reached the pass, only 11,000 feet above the sea, but bleak and alpine for all that. And just at that moment the sun shone out through the tears. Behind us



were the grim grey turrets of the range, but westwards we gazed over the wide wet valleys of Indo-Malaya, soft and rounded under their mantle of green jungle. The clouds, frothing over the endless ranges, lie like packing between them, and the sun lights up a gently-heaving ocean of mountain, forest, and sky.

Then down we plunge again, over the alpine pastures and into the dim forest, while the growing torrent grates and grumbles down the steep rock stairway. Once more we camp under an immense



SHAN GIRLS OF HKAMTI LONG.

tilted slab of rock, and on the following day reach a village, or, at any rate, a few huts. Here we change porters once more.

Now on again through the jungle, where palms and screw-pines and tree-ferns are beginning to appear, till we reach the Tazu river. This is crossed, not by a "monkey" bridge, but by a hammock bridge of cane—a real bridge, one we can walk across. But we must walk gingerly, nevertheless, holding on tight with both hands. And when we reach the beautiful Nam Tamai, which, rising amongst the snow-peaks at the edge

of the Tibetan plateau, comes singing through the forest, we feel we are nearing home.

There are more huts here, more cultivation, more people. The women also tattoo their faces differently from their sisters of the cold Taron—just a *soupsan*, a few curving lines from one angle of the mouth to the other, a wee circle on the tip of the nose, that is all.

We cross the Nam Tamai and begin the ascent of the last great barrier, the divide between the eastern and western branches of million-throated Irrawaddy. It is only 4,000 feet to the top—a day's march through the fragrant forest. The livery of these giant trees is wonderful. They are bearded with lichen and frilled with the gayest, craftiest orchids. Bushes of milk-white rhododendron flower in their boles, though it is mid-November; ferns, aroids, and the lolling scarlet *Æschynanthus* seek shelter on the great limbs.

Descending the far side of the ridge, smothered up in the dim jungle, we come suddenly to where the side of the mountain has peeled away, leaving a gap and a scar. Over the tops of the trees below we can see westwards, far and wide. We are looking over the hot, moist valleys of the western Irrawaddy.

Still up and down over the endless ranges, crossing innumerable vexed rivers, till we come to the wide Nam Tisang; and here on the bank is a real village, with cattle, and people, and girls drawing water from the river.

Five days later we struggled to the summit of the last ridge. The spurs flared away into the rosy west. Below us, spread-out like a map, was the honey-coloured plain, across which shone the silver bow of the western Irrawaddy. In one pregnant hour we raced down the steep flank of the range and emerged from the forest on to the wide plain, free men.

What a night that was! So pure and peaceful everything seemed here, released from the grip of the jungle and the slam of angry water. Cattle, driven home to the little Shan village where we slept, lowed pleasantly. Doves cooed in the jackfruit trees, and the silvery notes of a gong whispered from the pagoda under the sago palms.

One more march over the flat, wallowing in the flowery pastures, striding across the paddy fields, brought us to Fort Hertz, the last outpost in Burma, 200 miles from

railhead; and here I received a warm welcome from the three white men in residence.

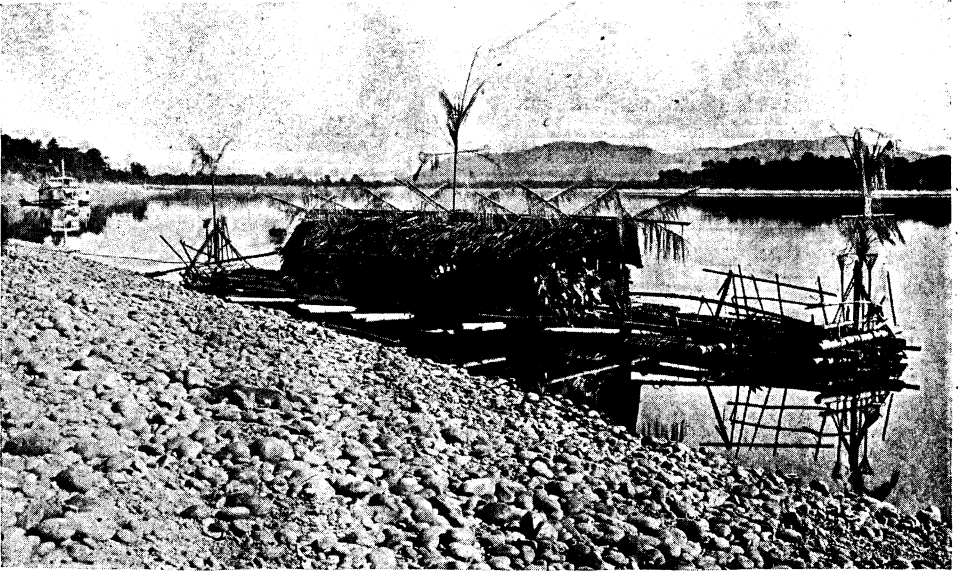
After a rest and a wash and brush-up, I hired mules once more and started south for the railway and civilisation. There is a splendid mule road, with rest bungalows all the way, and the journey is easily accomplished in a fortnight.

Into the jungle we plunged once more, where the tick and clack and buzz of restless insect life vibrated throughout the day, and the roar of the hungry tiger horrified us by night. Babblers and laughing thrushes bickered under the bamboos, and the monotonous *twonk twonk* of a barbet nearly sent me into a frenzy. But the most joyous

sound of the jungle is the hoot of the hullock monkey at dawn, the cry of the white-faced gibbon greeting the sunrise, when the dew is dripping loudly from the trees, and the mountains are crystallising out of the curdled mist.

And so we came to the Irrawaddy confluence, where eastern and western branches rush together. We are still a thousand miles from the sea, but there is only one thing in the world which makes a noise like that we listen to now—it is the hoot of a steamer out on the broad bosom of the river.

Two days later we reach Myitkyina, and one fine morning I find myself prosaically purchasing a railway ticket for Rangoon. The journey is over.



A KACHIN RAFT ON THE IRRAWADDY JUST BELOW THE CONFLUENCE OF ITS EASTERN AND WESTERN BRANCHES.

## THE MESSENGER.

**G**REEN drift transfigures all the hopeful trees,  
 For buds innumerable strive to break  
 In tender veils and kindly canopies—  
 Cool havens builded for each sweet bird's sake.

Begone, my cloak of Winter solitude!  
 Lo, while triumphant voices wake and sing,  
 The woodpecker, impatient of my mood,  
 Taps for my heart to open to the Spring!

PERCY HASELDEN.

# WORTH A MILLION

By ALAN SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

IF you drop one leg of a compass into Fish Falls on the headwaters of the Ottawa River and swing the other leg in a hundred-mile circle, that circle will intersect the middle of Loon Lake. And Loon Lake, as all the world knows, is so called on account of those large, sleek and wary birds which make it a favourite haunt in a season of the year, and fill the starlit nights with their weird and ghostly laughter. For the rest of it, the shores are wrapped in an unbroken stretch of pine forest, where the ground hemlock grows thick amongst the upthrusting rocks, and the black bear hibernates through the months of bitter weather.

It fell on an evening when Loon Lake was one long streak of molten silver that a wrinkle like a tiny arrow-head appeared in the purple distance, and at the point of it a canoe moved slowly, as moves a dry leaf before the ghost of a little wind. It was a bark canoe, fashioned from the skin of the birch tree, light as a feather and tawny as the maple leaf in autumn. In it sat a little, wrinkled man, whose bright blue eyes rested in a steady stare on the changing panorama of the timbered shore. There was peace in that gaze and a vast contentment. His lean face was tanned a mahogany brown; between his teeth he gripped a short and battered briar pipe, and with every dawdling stroke of his dipping paddle he sent forth a tiny jet of smoke. The general effect was that of a bronze automaton, clad in nondescript dress and vitalised by some inward and intermittent fire.

It is written that the wilderness sets her seal upon her own. You may read it not only in the silent places, but also in the cities of men when you mark the stranger who walks lightly and leans a little forward as he walks, whose eyes are quiet and seem to be fixed on things a long way off, and on whose face is the odd suggestion that there is much in the world of no importance whatever. If you know him personally, you will observe that he is dignified without

being stiff, strong and yet gentle, and exhibits a quizzical amusement when other folk are nervous and impatient. He can be swift as lightning in action and adamant in endurance. And all this is because from a thousand and speechless sources he has drawn fortitude and courage. Sweet airs have breathed on him while he slept, and his body has absorbed the secret vitality of many a forest.

Now, if you had attempted to explain all this to old Billinger, he would have shifted his pipe to the other corner with a sidelong twist of the lips, spat into the stainless surface of Loon Lake, and remarked "Hell!" with a kind of contemptuous pity. Further, if you asked him why he had spent forty years prospecting with no real luck at all, he would demand in unscriptural language if you knew any dodgasted better kind of life that a man could lead. If you were wise, you would hastily say you did not. But for all of this, Billinger loved the woods, and was content to scratch the moss from innumerable rocks on the off-chance of making his one big strike. And it came to him every evening of his life that he would do this very thing the very next day. That conviction is the vital spark of every real prospector.

Loon Lake was engulfed in purple obscurity when, rounding a little point, he discerned at some distance the red and blinking eye of a camp fire. Were Billinger new to the woods, he had forthwith given a shout and paddled straight forward; but, instead, his dipping blade dipped even more noiselessly, and he slid on like a spirit of the night to see what manner of camp this might be.

Half an hour later he peered from darkness into light. The fire was a few yards from the shore. Beside it sat a large black-haired man busily occupied in breaking fragments of rock with a hammer. A little further back a cluster of spruce trees had been freshly blazed, the naked wood standing out like pink-white columns in the firelight.

On one side was a shed tent. A canoe lay bottom up close to the water. There was no sound save the clink of the hammer, an occasional ejaculation, and the lisp of the sleepy lake in its stony cradle.

Billinger leaned forward, being instantly aware of several things. First, he knew the man, whose reputation on the Upper Ottawa was lurid, even for that country. Second, he had only arrived within the last day or two, this being evident from the appearance of the camp. Third, he had made a strike and staked it. Fourth, he was travelling alone and had expected to go much farther. Fifth, the indications were that he would be starting hot foot—at sunrise—for the Recorder's office at Fish Falls.

The little man chewed at all this as he floated only a hundred yards away, and his pipe went out in the process. He had a queer feeling that Black Mackay had struck high-grade stuff. If so, it was reasonable to assume there was more of it, in which case Loon Lake would be alive with men in a week. Meantime there were two things Billinger might do. He could camp out of sight till Mackay had pushed on, or he could land now and take the chance of getting valuable information. Deciding on the latter, he knocked his paddle sharply on the gunwale and made for shore. Mackay sat up stiffly and shaded his eyes.

Now, the entry of one prospector into the camp of another is, when done according to Hoyle, something of an art. There is a brief greeting on both sides, but no questions on either side. Any display of curiosity only rouses suspicion. No special notice must be taken of anything in camp unless it is offered for notice. The talk is impersonal. It deals with the last prospecting regulations, bush fires, the thickness of the ice the preceding winter, notable journeys through the wilderness and the time in which they were made, recent smelter returns from well-known mines, but never, never with the immediate object of either party to the talk. Thus it happened that nearly an hour passed before Black Mackay picked up a bit of rock from the little heap at his side, tossed it across, and asked with assumed diffidence what the newcomer thought of that.

Billinger balanced it in his horny palm and gulped at the weight of it. The lump was half silver. Such ore would run ten thousand ounces to the ton. And it was oxidised ore from the surface, tinged with the exquisite purple and pink of weathered cobalt.

"Came from the bottom level of the La

Rose, didn't it?" he said calmly. The La Rose was one of the richest mines in the district.

"La Rose be busted!" chuckled Mackay. "It came from just a hundred feet behind where you're sitting. Six solid inches wide, and I've stripped her for over two hundred feet. Ever see the beat of it?"

Billinger did not answer at once. He knew this was truth. The other man's voice held a new note. He was usually lying, but this was not his usual tone. The heavy face became suddenly triumphant, and the furtive eyes took on a strange gleam.

"The way claims are selling farther south is a hundred thousand for each inch of width a hundred feet long. Say, Bill, on that reckoning, this lode is worth more than a million. Do you get me?"

Billinger nodded, speech being superfluous.

"Know how I found her?" went on Mackay deliberately. "Well, I slept right on top of the darned thing last night, and there was a point of rock that jammed into my ribs, so I got up and knocked it off in the dark. It was lying beside me next morning—half silver. No one's ever landed here before—wasn't a sign of any kind."

Billinger pushed out his lips and felt oddly suspicious. That last remark seemed out of place, for a man could easily land and leave no sign. His eyes travelled from the shifty face to the smouldering fire, and he noted casually a half-burned stake of which three sides were charred away. Now, why should any man burn a stake when there was plenty of dead wood close at hand? Then something flickered through his brain. He got up and stretched himself.

"I guess I'll turn in."

Mackay nodded. "Me, too. Say, I'll show you that lode in the morning."

"Sure, I'd like to see it. Mebbe I'd better put out that fire. Country's pretty dry."

He strolled to water's edge, filled a bucket, and emptied it on the hissing coals. Came a little cloud of vapour and the pungent smell of hot charcoal. On top of this he heaped some damp moss.

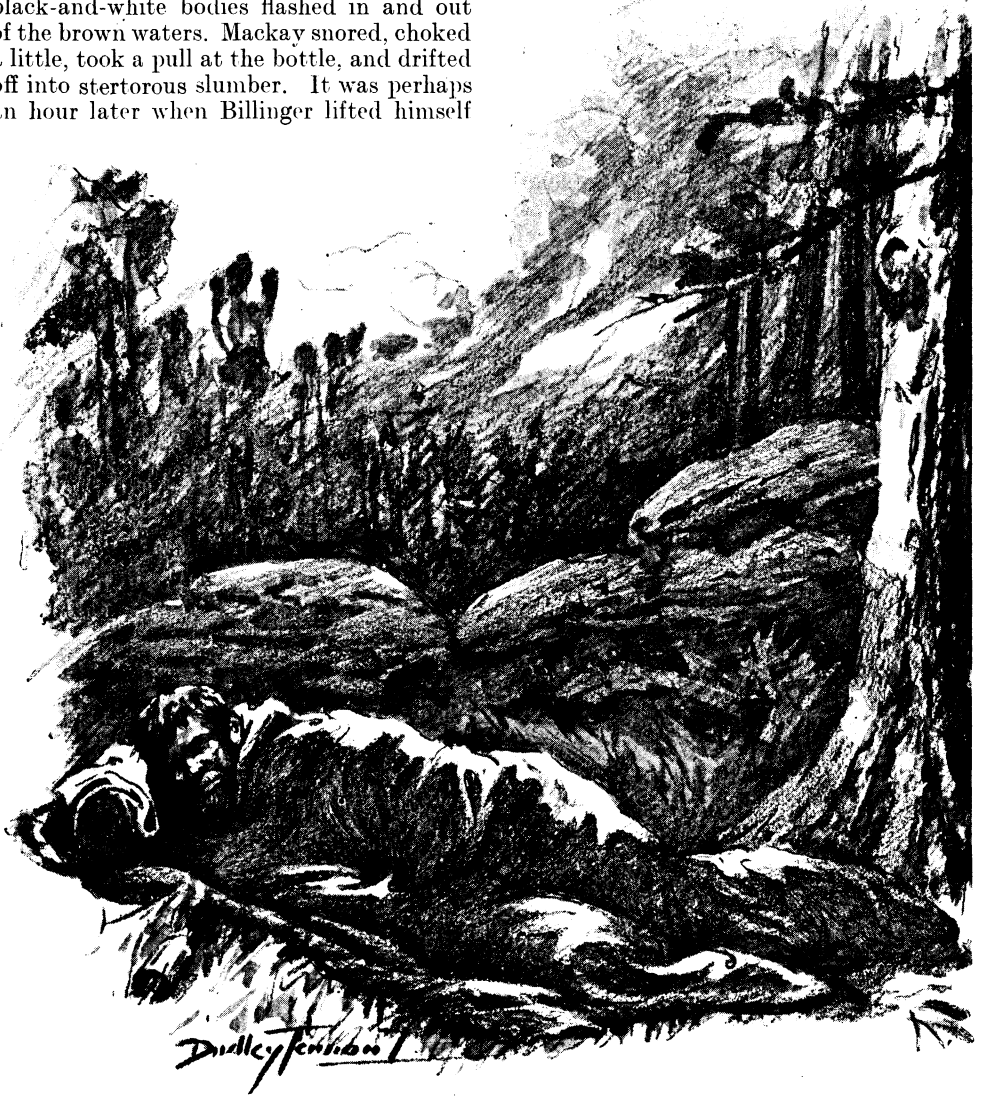
"Might as well have a bit of a smudge. Flies are likely to be bad to-night."

Mackay grunted and brought out a black bottle, whereat Billinger shook his head. "Thanks just the same, but I don't do any drinking when I'm prospecting."

Mackay got between his blankets with the bottle within reach, and pulled a fold over his face. Billinger chose a soft spot

under a near-by spruce, shut his eyes, and to all appearances went to sleep like a child. An owl hooted melodiously, and presently from the middle of Loon Lake came the wild laughter of its guardian spirits as their black-and-white bodies flashed in and out of the brown waters. Mackay snored, choked a little, took a pull at the bottle, and drifted off into stertorous slumber. It was perhaps an hour later when Billinger lifted himself

stake. The fourth side was blackened, but, quite sharply, he could read a name carved deep, followed by the number of a miner's



"The moon was clear, and he could see Mackay's forehead."

gently on one arm and looked about. Nothing could have been more silent than the camp of Black Mackay.

Billinger got up on tiptoes and approached the extinguished fire. The moon was clear, and he could see Mackay's forehead. The bottle was empty on its side. The little man's lips tightened as he stooped and, lifting the steaming moss, pulled forth the charred

license and a date. His heart quickened when he noted that the latter was only three days previously. And the name he read was not Mackay's.

He stood for a moment, then stepped noiselessly to the shore and thrust the stake into the bow of his canoe. This done, he went back, stared fixedly at the stupefied Mackay, and moved on to the obscurity

of the bush. A hundred feet away he found the lode, where six inches of native silver gleamed nakedly in the moonlight. He had never seen anything like this before. A

to think of Mackay with a million. The other name came to him then. Birkett, the biggest - hearted, best - natured and unluckiest man in the silver country ; Birkett,



"He could read a name carved deep. . . . And the name he read was not Mackay's."

million—yes, it was worth that if the entire Cobalt district was worth a cent. He tried

who was always emptying his pockets to help the other fellow ; Birkett, who burned

the hair off his head saving a farmer's child in the bushfire at Porcupine. So it was Birkett's strike, and Mackay was a claim jumper.

Now, in the North Country there is nothing so despicable in the human line as the claim jumper, and nothing in the way of animals unless it be carcajou, the wolverene. The claim jumper has no courage and no bowels. He lives on what he steals. He is crooked and slothful. He robs the poor and toadies to the rich. He is apt to travel by night, and, in fear of pursuit, his ear is always to the ground. To honest men he is outcast beyond all possibility of redemption.

This and much more was in Billinger's mind as he stood in the moonlight. He noted Mackay's blazes, and noted also that two spruce trees had been cut down close to the lode. The trees had disappeared, which meant that they had carried Birkett's blazes. Then, travelling carefully, he found the corner posts. These had been shaved down from former and larger dimensions, and among the shavings he discovered traces of deeply-cut letters. Gathering up this further and damning evidence, he worked back to the camp, swearing under his breath as he stumbled over fallen logs in the thick bush. The whole inspection had occupied something like three hours.

Black Mackay lay motionless, and, as he stared, plan after plan raced through the little man's mind. He could not obliterate the claim-jumper's blazes, for the stroke of an axe would arouse him instantly. Billinger had but small chance in a fight. He knew that. Birkett was no doubt on the way to Fish Falls, whence Billinger had just journeyed, and the two must have passed each other a few hours previously. The former might hurry, and he might not. If he did not, the odds were that Mackay would record the discovery first, and what the outcome would be no man could tell. The first filing of the claim was all-important.

It came to Billinger that he might take Mackay's canoe and sink it in deep water, or even tow it round the nearest point and hide it in the bush; but there is a certain unwritten law of the wilderness that bids one fight fair, even with the crooked. So he put that out of his mind. He might start a bit of a fire, as prospectors sometimes do to bare the ground, but the woods were dry, and the fire might run anywhere, with disastrous results to others. No, think as

hard as he could, there was but one decent chance, and this was to light out at once, push toward Fish Falls as fast as possible, and trust to luck to finding Birkett before it was too late. At that Billinger nodded approvingly, gathered his dunnage as one might pick feathers from a pillow, and launched his canoe as lightly as a wild pigeon lands in the top of a white birch.

He covered the sixteen miles to the toe of Loon Lake in a shade over four hours, which is good going for one paddle. The thing was not to use himself up on the first lap. On the way across the portage he chewed a bit of bacon rind, then settled down for the next leg of ten miles across Duck Lake. At the end of that another portage, and ere he reached it, he caught the smoke of a camp fire just at the land-place. There was no tent up. He was breathing hard when the bow of his canoe touched the sand. Beside the fire lay a man whose posture was so unnatural that Billinger's pulse quickened. The man turned his head. Billinger saw that it was Birkett. He jerked up the nose of his canoe and knelt beside him.

"What's up?"

Birkett groaned. "Hell's own luck. I've twisted my back on the portage. Had the canoe up and stumbled. I tried to straighten up, and something cracked in my spine. I was making for Fish Falls, and, Bill, I've got to get there somehow. I managed to start a fire, but since that I can't feel anything."

"Reckon mebbe you were going to record a claim?" Billinger had no time to waste on sympathy.

The other man looked up into the brown face as though for reassurance before he spoke. He must have found what he sought, for he made a gesture at his pack-sack that lay close by. "Open it."

Billinger obeyed. On the top, wrapped in a towel as dirty as only a prospector's towel can be, he found three lumps the size of his fist. They were mostly native silver, freshly broken, the silver flattened here and there beneath the hammer. Then he felt Birkett's eyes.

"I reckon she's worth a million, Bill. And she's mine."

"That's exactly what Black Mackay said last night," murmured Billinger quietly.

Birkett propped himself on an elbow, and groaned with the effort. "What in Sam Hill are you talking about?"

The answer was peculiar and effective.

The little man stepped to his canoe and, taking out a charred stake and a handful of shavings, placed them in a neat little heap. Using few words, but missing nothing essential, he told the story. It was punctuated with blasphemous interludes supplied by Birkett. Then Birkett plucked at Billinger's shirt-sleeve and offered him a half interest in the claim if he would see this thing through.

"But I ain't asking for any interest. I'm just trying to think what I can do to stop Mackay. I ain't big enough to fight him, and I dassent shoot him, though I'd like to, and he's as good in a canoe as I am and a sight stronger with a paddle, and you're a dead weight if I take you as cargo, and he's liable to be along here in about seven hours, or I miss my guess, and, any way you look at it, we're seventy-five miles from Fish Falls. Now it's your say."

Birkett took a long and painful breath. "It's only fifty by Cat Creek," he said slowly.

The little man stared at him. Cat Creek flows through a gorge that leads into the Ottawa waters. It is probably the worst stream in the silver district, being full of rocks, rapids, and ugly backwater. Otherwise one could save twenty-five miles on the Loon Lake route. One does not save it. The easier and safer way is to go round by Lost Lake. It is said that an Indian once ran Cat Creek because an American tourist offered him a hundred dollars. But that was the only time on record. Billinger knew all this. A sort of thin fire began to run through his veins.

"She's worth a million if she's worth a cent," said Birkett shakily. That ribbon of native silver loomed larger in his mind than did Cat Creek with all its perils.

Billinger twisted his lips. "Reckon you'd have to come with me."

He spoke as though thinking aloud, visioning Birkett on his back in the bottom of the canoe, inert, a helpless hulk, without a ghost of a chance if he got spilled into heavy water. That meant victory for Black Mackay. There was no turning back once a man pushed off from the upper end of the gorge. On the other hand, half a million hung in the balance, and a reputation that would live in the silver country. It was this last thought that decided him.

"I'll take you through—or drown you," he added parenthetically.

Birkett sent him a thankful grin. "When do we start?"

Preparations were few. Tents and dunnage cached behind a neighbouring ridge, save only one blanket for Birkett to lie on. They took the silver samples, the charred stake, the handful of shavings and a spare paddle—in case. Billinger put the canoe over his head, trotted across the portage and came back for the other man. In half an hour he was headed for Cat Creek.

Birkett lay still propped against a thwart, scribbling something in an old notebook. There was no talk. The little man needed all his breath, also he experienced that strange silencing effect of the wilderness, in virtue of which human speech seems at variance with one's surroundings. Queer interludes, these, of communication without speech, while Nature becomes vocal and converses in a myriad of liquid and mystical tongues to those who have ears to hear. Billinger had not got so far as to think this out, but he felt it. If one had burdened him with pointless chatter, he would merely have asked why in hell one could not keep quiet. That meant the same thing.

The upper end of the gorge came in sight, its precipitous slopes dark with pine. The air was filled with a deep, soft tremor. Birkett twisted himself painfully and glanced ahead, while Billinger settled on his knees and seemed to grip the canoe with the entire lower part of his body. Getting into the draw of Cat Creek, they slid forward without a stroke. The tremor grew louder, expanding into a sort of roar, such as made by a train passing over a trestle bridge. Birkett lifted his hand.

"Solon, pilgrim, if we both don't make it, but I guess you're all right. If I stop in Cat Creek, you file the claim. Here's the documents. She's worth a million!" He tore a page from the note-book.

Billinger nodded, crumpled the paper, and thrust it into his pocket. He wondered now why he had never learned to swim.

Cat Creek begins with a straight race and a current about seven miles an hour. There are a few rocks, big and easily avoided. Below this the gorge narrows to a series of jumps two or three feet high, separated by long pools streaked with tawny foam. Billinger took these much as a good horse takes a hedge, the thing being to take them fast, so that one's stern will not be engulfed at the foot of the jump. So far he had shipped but little water. Came a big eddy where he floated and caught his breath. Birkett nodded approvingly.



"That's ten out of twenty-five, old horse."

Billinger grunted, edged into the main stream, and swept on. It was not so bad here, and he kept an eye ahead for fallen timber across Cat Creek. This was what he dreaded most. But the Creek was unbelievably clear.

At fifteen miles he approached the Gut, where the waters flow as a drunken snake might travel, only faster. The banks are rugged—no escape there. The canoe went through the first swell, shaken like a rat in the jaws of a terrier. In front was a welter of white-capped water in which were hidden emerald cellars where the stream dipped with sharp curves of high velocity into great holes in its rocky bed. At the lower edge of each cellar was a high and gathered wave that curled and broke upstream. One could not see the cellars, but only guess at them. In these lurking caverns the life is battered out of a man in a few seconds. A canoe is reduced to matchwood. But between them lay a tortuous and hissing course of possible safety. Billinger picked this out a hundred feet at a time, smelling his way as much as seeing it. Such was his speed and the roughness of the water that he could do little more than attempt to keep near the middle of the lane between the cellars, past which the canoe flashed like a yellow chip. He had just concluded that the worst was over when the bottom seemed to fall out of Cat Creek.

Of the next moment he remembered but little save that he dropped into a sort of smooth and shining basin and the canoe darted up the side of it into a solid wall of water. He hung on to his paddle, but could see nothing. Birkett was blotted out, and he could feel the canoe labouring like an overburdened horse. The water hit him in the breast as might a great soft hammer, while a confused roaring sounded from a thousand miles away. He wasn't frightened, but it was rotten luck for Birkett to have to take his medicine lying down. Then light dawned suddenly. The canoe gunwale was just awash, and Birkett submerged up to his middle. A little air, trapped in the pointed bow and stern was keeping them afloat. They rolled sluggishly, and were swept into a wide pool bordered by a sand beach. The water here was only some four feet deep.

Billinger leaned forward, both hands on the gunwale, worked his legs over the side and let himself down. Then, walking very

carefully, he pushed the canoe ashore, tilted out half the water, lifted out the dripping Birkett, and lay down flat on his back. Followed silence for ten minutes, when Billinger rolled over, unscrewed a vulcanite matchbox, unrolled a rubber pouch, revealing dry tobacco, blew the water from the stem of his pipe and began to smoke.

"When you're ready, old son, we'll start," he said laconically.

They sped on without further speech, till, at five miles from the mouth of Cat Creek, they saw ahead what is known as the Chute, a long steep incline, where the bed of the stream has been polished smooth by the sheer velocity of the ripping waters. At the end of this it hunches its back, darts between two opposing crags twenty feet apart, and broadens out into a loitering flood that seems suddenly weary of its former riotous life. Billinger had never seen the place before, but there was talk of it round many a camp fire. Now, when he did see it, his pulse slowed. Birkett was staring, too. His eyes narrowed. He said not a word.

They went down the Chute like a bullet. Billinger's muscles turned to steel while he held the canoe bow on the middle of the gap. Five feet on either side lay death and, what was worse to them than death, the loss of a million. Unseen forces tugged at him, as though dripping devils were twisting him out of his course. Against them he pitched his ultimate strength, his small, lean body transformed into a half-human instrument of straining bone and throbbing sinew. A hundred feet from the Chute the bow swerved. Birkett shut his eyes, but Billinger wrenched it back in the nick of time. Then came the hump between the crags. On the top of this they balanced precariously for an endless second, the river beneath like a bucking broncho, and above them a great leaning cedar just ready to fall. Finally a smooth, easy glide, and comparative silence, and the lower end of Cat Creek slipping quietly toward Ottawa waters.

"Jumping Moses," said Birkett under his breath, "but you've done it!"

Billinger was unscrewing his matchbox. Presently he glanced up. "Got a dry one? This leaks."

At ten o'clock next morning a canoe might have been discerned some three miles from Fish Falls, moving very fast. In the middle sat Black Mackay, putting his back into his work. He had covered nearly a

hundred miles in thirty hours, which is the limit for one paddle. Holding to the middle of the stream to get the full current, he noted with some astonishment that up either shore, and as much as possible out of the current, pushed a procession of canoes all heading in the direction whence he had come. He recognised some of the occupants. They were all prospectors, and obviously

table that served for a desk. He looked up and nodded.

"I want to file a claim on Loon Lake," Mackay did his best not to breathe hard. "Can I have a blank form?"

There was put in front of him the Government schedule of particulars of discovery which every prospector must fill up when filing a claim. Dates, location, district,



"The gorge narrows to a series of jumps. . . . Billinger took these much as a good horse takes a hedge."

bent on urgent business. It was the outward and evident sign of a good strike up-country. He had a spasm of misgiving, and dug his paddle deeper.

Running ashore at Fish Falls, he found the place deserted, save for women and children. There was not a canoe left, not a man in sight. He hurried along the row of wooden shacks till he came to the Recorder's office, and, finding the door open, tramped in. The Recorder was at the wooden

area, miner's licence number—all must be attested, then an affidavit that it is a genuine and original discovery. Mackay laboured over the form till it was complete, and made his oath glibly and falsely. The Recorder turned to the table and began another form. This must be his end of it, and Mackay shuffled his feet impatiently. He had never known writing to be so deliberate. Presently something snapped in his brain, and he felt horribly uncomfortable.

"When do I get that certificate?" he grunted.

"This isn't a certificate—it's a warrant." The Recorder turned on Mackay a cold blue eye. "Step into the next room."

Mackay, moving forward as in a dream, opened a door. Inside he saw another table on which lay a charred stake and a bundle of shavings. Beside the table stood a man with blue clothes, a lantern jaw, and a badge. A voice sounded close behind.

"Officer, do your duty. Here is your authority."

Mackay's head began to swim. He felt

a hand on his shoulder, and was propelled toward outer air. There was no time to think, or do anything except just go—and he went. Lounging in the sun near the front of the shack were two figures that had not been there before. He knew them both. These men glanced at him as though he were a total stranger, then stared casually across the Upper Ottawa. He had not been steered more than another thirty feet when there came to his ears quite distinctly a lazy, sleepy, contented drawl:

"I reckon she's worth a million, Bill, if she's worth a cent."

And she was.



## ON CHOSEN HILL.

**O**N Chosen Hill, so long ago,  
We strayed together, I and you,  
With summer roses all a-blow,  
When life was very fresh and new.  
(Are sweet wild roses blowing still  
On Chosen Hill, on Chosen Hill?)

Such years ago—so long, it seems—  
We watched the fleeting shadows pass,  
And heard the fairy flute of dreams  
That whispered in the waving grass.  
(Do little winds go sighing still  
On Chosen Hill, on Chosen Hill?)

Ah, would the years but set me free,  
It's I'd be going once again  
Where buried lies the heart of me,  
And I would climb the winding lane  
To find the dreams that linger still  
On Chosen Hill, on Chosen Hill!

ANNE PAGE.

# THE WELL

By DOROTHY ROGERS

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLIER

DONALD HAMES threw away his cigarette and turned to the girl beside him with an air of determination; but the words he was about to say were abruptly checked, for even in the starlit darkness of the terrace he could see that there was something wrong with her. She was standing in a shrinkingly rigid attitude, one hand pressed against her throat, and her head averted as if she were looking at something terrible. Before he could ask a question, however, her position relaxed, and she turned her face towards him with a little breathless laugh.

"How eerie it is out here," she said, "with that black shrubbery whispering and rustling in the silence! It almost frightens one."

He bent towards her. "You were frightened, weren't you? Why?" he asked quietly.

Monica Weaving again turned away her head, and fidgeted with the long fringe of a scarf that covered her shoulders. "It sounds a ridiculous thing to say," she began hesitatingly, "but I always am afraid on this terrace. I can't think why. There is no reason for it, and I wouldn't let Nancy and the others know for worlds; they would laugh at me. I didn't intend you to know, either, but just then it was almost uncontrollable. I felt absolutely panic-stricken!"

"Surely you didn't think I should laugh at you?" he asked, with a hint of reproach in his tone.

"No, I didn't," she replied warmly, "but I am ashamed of my foolishness, and therefore wished to hide what I could not cure."

"I expect you have got the story of the place on your mind," he said. "It was rather silly of the Maynards if they mentioned it. They don't, as a rule."

"They never mentioned it. Has it a story? Please tell me!" she exclaimed.

He glanced at her a little uncomfortably. "Oh, it is only an old tale—not worth telling or hearing."

"But I *want* to hear it," she insisted.

"Don't you think it may increase your

nervousness? Like most yarns of the kind, it is a bit queer, you know."

"No," she replied firmly. "It might supply a reason. I don't like being unreasonably afraid—it seems so neurotic. I have tried very hard indeed to conquer the feeling, and now I know that is impossible, I should at least like to think there is a solution of it."

"So be it! You shall know the worst," Hames said laughingly, as he lit another cigarette. "But before I begin, let us annex the chairs at the other end of the terrace. You may as well hear the blood-curdling story in comfort."

As they settled themselves down, he asked her more seriously: "Are you still nervous?"

"No," she said. "It comes over me like a wave at times, but it has gone now, and I am longing to hear the tale. Please begin."

"Well, as you know, the Maynards have only owned this house for the last four or five years. Before they bought it, it had changed hands once or twice."

"I know," she said, "my——" She paused an instant to disentangle the fringe of her scarf from her chair, and he continued:

"Of course. Nancy would tell you all that. They got it rather cheaply, I believe, because the last man who had it was killed in France just before the Armistice, and his widow wanted to clear out as soon as possible and go back to her own people. I don't know who had the place before then, but, at any rate, not more than twenty years ago it was still in the possession of the family who had owned it ever since it was built, in good Queen Anne's time, and upon this family—this is where the thrill comes—there appears to have been a sort of curse."

Monica leant forward in her chair. "A curse!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. It seems that long ago—I forget when, but probably in the early days of the house—a tragedy occurred here. Bellamy was the name of the people who owned it

then." Monica nodded silently. "The only son, Ralph, became engaged to a very nice girl, lovely and accomplished and all that, but highly-strung, super-sensitive, you know. Well, Ralph Bellamy's mother appears to have been rather an unbalanced woman with a fearfully jealous temper. The girl, who was an orphan, was staying here, and her future mother-in-law made her life unendurable by her jealousy. One day, after a terrible scene, in which Ralph's mother accused his *fiancée* of causing him unhappiness, the girl was so utterly overwhelmed and broken-hearted that she rushed out down those steps and threw herself into the old well which is in the shrubbery. You have probably seen it?"

Monica gave an exclamation of horror, then replied: "No, I have never seen it. I didn't know there was a well in the shrubbery."

"There is," he went on. "Ralph Bellamy never forgave his mother, and gradually the shock of the girl's death and her son's attitude towards herself so preyed on her mind that in time it became unhinged. She used to sit for hours on this terrace, muttering and trembling, so the story goes, and one day, less than two years after the first tragedy, she also threw herself into the well. Some years' later her son married, and his descendants lived here, as I said before, until about twenty years ago. But the queer part of the tale is this—nearly every woman of the family seemed to be affected by that well. None of the men, only the women. It is said that at least two more were actually drowned in it, and several died suddenly in the grounds quite near to it. The villagers say, of course, that there is a curse on the place."

"Why was the well never filled up?" the girl asked in a low voice.

"Apparently several members of the family tried at various times to have it done, but something always prevented them. One man died just when he was preparing to have it seen to, and as he left his affairs rather involved, his heir had other things to think about. Another time, they say, an epidemic broke out in the village, and they could not get workmen. The years drifted on, and you know how things get left. The well is there to this day, still uncovered."

"How horrible!" Monica murmured, shivering slightly.

Hames, absorbed now in his own story, continued impressively: "Yes, and it is a curious thing that up to the very last it

maintained its evil influence. An old Miss Bellamy lived here then. She fell ill, and a niece, whom she had mothered until the girl married and went abroad, came home to nurse her aunt. She hadn't been here more than a week when she was found dead at the bottom of those steps there that lead down into the shrubbery. People said her heart was weak, that she must have fallen down the steps, and that the shock had killed her, but the villagers, to a man, believe now that she was under the same malign spell. Anyway, the old aunt died about the same time, and after that the house was sold."

He lit another cigarette and then turned lightly to Monica. "So you see," he said, "it is very possible that some special sensitiveness has made you subconsciously aware of all this tragedy and so caused your nervousness about the place. Don't you think that is it?"

Monica sat absolutely silent and so still that, after a moment, Hames began to be uneasy.

"I say, I haven't made you feel worse than ever about it, have I? I wasn't keen on telling the story, you know, lest it should upset you."

She turned towards him slowly and spoke in a curiously detached tone. "No, it was my wish that you should tell me. But—that woman who died at the bottom of the steps—was my mother!"

"Good Heavens!" he whispered under his breath. For a moment both remained silent. Hames was too appalled to speak, and Monica was striving to realise the significance of the tale.

She it was who broke the silence by saying in a low voice: "I never knew before how she died. They must have kept it from me very carefully. That old Miss Bellamy, my great-aunt, brought her up, and she married very young. My father was an artist, and they spent the four years of their married life in Italy, because he loved it so. The shock of her death here, when visiting her aunt, was so terrible to my father that he never got over it, but died himself within the year. I was only just three then, and his sister, my Aunt Ada, adopted me. This is the first time I have ever been here since I came over with my father at *her* death." She paused, then added thoughtfully: "Is that why I am afraid? Do you think the curse is on me, too?"

Hames sprang to his feet, hurling his cigarette over into the garden below.

"Good Heavens, no!" he exclaimed vehemently. "Don't let such a ghastly thought enter your head! Why—why, the house doesn't even belong to your family now! The curse, if it ever existed, would die a natural death when the house passed into other hands." Miserably aware of the weakness of his argument, he continued hurriedly: "I shall never forgive

done by telling you. I——" He stopped as if speech were beyond him.

She rose to her feet, leaving her hands still in his. "Don't distress yourself so," she said gently. "I own that it was rather a shock for a moment, but more because of the details of my mother's death than anything else. It is ridiculous that an inanimate thing like that well should have



"She was standing in a shrinkingly rigid attitude, one hand pressed against her throat."

myself if I have caused you to believe there is any horrible influence upon you!"

Suddenly he bent over her, taking both her hands in his, conscious, as he touched them, of their extreme coldness. "Monica"—he spoke her name for the first time in a low, passionate tone—"for my sake try to forget this stupid story. I can't bear to think of what I may have

an influence over generation after generation of women. Possibly the earlier ones were superstitious, and got the story so firmly implanted in their minds that they absolutely frightened themselves into suicide. As for my mother, they knew her heart was weak. I don't believe that any evil spell caused her death. But," she added in a lower tone, "I never knew that she died so near this

spot. Perhaps that is why I have always had such a fear of it. Who can tell? Intuition is very strange."

Her eyes had wandered thoughtfully in the direction of the steps, but now they returned to his face, seen dimly in the darkness.

"You won't trouble about it any more, will you?" she questioned sweetly. "I am much too sceptical about the whole thing to be influenced as my predecessors were. I don't really believe in the very least that there is a curse or spell, or whatever it is, so please don't regret having told me." Her tone was insistent.

Donald Hames's hands tightened upon hers. "Monica," he said softly, "you know why it troubled me, don't you? You know why I can't bear the thought of adding to your fear?"

The girl glanced at him swiftly and away.

"I loved you from the first, Monica," he went on simply. "The evening you arrived, when the Maynards invited me to dine and meet you—I knew before I left that night!"

Then out of a little silence she murmured wonderingly: "And that was only a fortnight ago!"

"Yet during that fortnight my whole life has turned into a new track."

There was another brief silence between them, that momentary pause which so often comes before the swift happening of some great event of life. Then as simply as he had spoken she now made reply: "Both our lives have turned—"

"Into the same track!" he finished eagerly. Then, as she did not answer, he swept her up into his embrace.

When at last they went back to the others, it was getting late. Nancy Maynard, with a *fiancé* of her own, had not noticed her chum's absence as much as Monica, full of a new self-consciousness, had been inclined to fear. The rest of the evening was of little importance to her or to Donald Hames. Both longed for a short time of quiet in which to realise their own happiness. At last Hames was able to take his leave, with only a strong pressure of the hand and a quick, intense look into Monica's eyes, lest the others should know too soon their jealous secret.

He left the house and, after finding and lighting a disreputable old pipe, started to walk down the dark drive, intending to return home along the quiet country road. The vision of Monica's wide blue eyes beneath level brows, and the remembrance

of her fragrant softness in his arms, filled his mind to the exclusion of all else. He felt exhilarated and restless. Not even the prospect of a brisk two-mile walk home quelled his excited energy. However, before he reached the entrance gates a sudden idea struck him, evolved from the one absorbing topic that preoccupied his thoughts. There was a winding path through the shrubbery which led to a small wicket-gate a good way further down the road in the direction he wished to take. This path passed not a hundred yards from the old well, now lost in a tangle of stems and branches. Donald Hames felt a certain curious desire to find the spot and see the well which had apparently exercised such a tragic influence over the ancestors of the girl he loved.

The moon was up. Not much of a moon, he said to himself; still, the night was clear and fine. On either side of him was a dark, silent mass of trees and tall shrubs. Peering keenly about as he walked, he soon discovered on his right the beginning of the narrow track. Turning into it, he felt his way carefully along between dense undergrowth that blotted out almost all light.

Giving only a vague attention to the wandering course of the path he followed, Hames allowed his mind once more to dwell upon his new happiness, and gave himself up to dreaming with shameless sentimentality. For some time his thoughts were a tumultuous and delicious medley of memories of the evening and hopes for all the transmuted years to come; of Monica as she had been to him at each one of their meetings; above all, of Monica as she had been to him that night. Every word she had said, and every dainty trick of speech or movement, he went over with unwearying delight in all things that concerned her—the very way she turned her head. Suddenly there came back to him most vividly the incident which had occurred before he proposed to her, which had, indeed, caused his first determined effort to die unspoken on his lips: the vision of Monica, her face averted in speechless fear, as if some horror, visible only to herself, lay in the shadows along the terrace.

A queer thing she should be so afraid of the place, he thought uneasily, taking his pipe out of his mouth and pausing to frown heavily into the bowl of it. An awfully queer thing, too, that it was her family—the women of her family—who had been

influenced in such an extraordinary fashion by the well. Great Scott! If he only had known that before he had begun gassing about the silly yarn! But Monica was very level-headed. She had said she did not believe there was anything in it, and of course there wasn't, there couldn't be. At the same time, wasn't there such a thing as inherited suggestion, or something of the sort? Rumm notion, but there might be some truth in it. He wished he had not told her the well was still in-existence. She had not even known of it until he had told her. Silly ass he had been! Anyway, the old shrubbery was very extensive, more like a dense wood than a shrubbery; probably the beastly well was hidden in such a labyrinth of bushes by now that neither she nor anybody else could find it if they wanted to.

Just then Hames stopped, realising that in such darkness he himself would have great difficulty in locating the place. There was a little clearing, scarcely more than a temporary widening of the path, after which one turned off through the bushes to the left. More than once had his friends taken him there by daylight, but this was a very different thing. He began to feel that it was a silly game to go prospecting round in that dense undergrowth. It was quite possible that he might find the well only by falling into it. However, having come so far along the path with the idea of looking for it, he decided that it would be equally silly to go on without at least having made the attempt. Gripping his pipe more determinedly between his teeth, he again proceeded cautiously on his way.

Not much further on he came to the clearing. Here a faint light from the moon filtered through the trees, just sufficient to indicate the path a little way ahead. After another brief hesitation, Hames fancied he had reached the right spot. Holding up one arm to shield his face from arresting branches, he plunged into the dark, leafy mass of great laurels and rhododendrons, and began slowly to fight his way through.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Donald Hames had gone, Monica felt a great longing to be alone. One or two guests still remained, and Nancy Maynard's *fiancé* had not yet departed. Quietly Monica made her escape with the intention of retiring to her own room. On her way upstairs, however, she remembered a book which she had begun and had laid aside,

half finished, in the library that evening. Conscious that her brain was much too excitedly active to allow her to sleep for some time, she resolved to fetch the book and read a while in bed.

Descending the staircase, she crossed the wide hall. The sounds of conversation and laughter came to her from the drawing-room as she did so. Softly she opened the library door, the sounds of merriment almost dying away as she entered and pushed the door to again behind her. The pale light of the young moon washed in through three long windows that led on to the terrace. Monica's hand hesitated on the electric switch, then fell from it as the soft radiance of the moonlight lured her. Instinctively she went over and looked out upon the spot where Donald Hames and she had stood not so very long before. Her lips curled with a little, happy smile as she stood dreaming.

On a sudden impulse she unfastened one of the windows and stepped outside. The night was very warm and still. She wanted to stand where they had stood together, silent in the new and wonderful knowledge of their love. Monica remained there a few moments, motionless, her eyes closed, her bright face tilted a little upward in the moonlight, as if her slightly parted lips were just awaiting her lover's kiss.

All at once she was seized by a strange uneasiness and, with a shiver, she opened her eyes. Unexpectedly there came upon her a sudden remembrance of the tragedy of the well. How persistently had some real or fancied influence from that well haunted the women of her family! It was even beginning to haunt her! For the first time she, too, was moved by a desire to run down those steps into the shrubbery beyond, to find the place that was linked with so much tragedy. In vain did Monica tell herself that the desire was ridiculous; it increased, nevertheless, with painful intensity.

Apprehensively she stared along the terrace. All was deserted. There had been no sound. Yet the entrancing memory had utterly vanished, and in its place, mingling with the new, insistent feeling, there awakened the old, inexplicable fear. It grew upon her swiftly until she felt surrounded by some intangible, menacing horror. It seemed to sweep her into the power of some passionately evil will against which there could be no struggling. Above all, she dared not scream. She felt that the cry of her own voice in this appalling stillness of fear would be the one thing past



endurance, that her very brain would shatter at the sound.

Monica's desire to get to the well rose to a passion. Her terrified gaze rested on the steps, whitened by the moonlight in strong contrast to the ominous, silent blackness of the shrubbery. Then she remembered that there was the spot where her mother had died with such tragic suddenness, and this thought helped her somewhat to pull herself together. She tried to make herself

believe that this association alone was the cause of her present panic. It was absurd. She would not give way to it. Because several hysterical women had in the past been influenced by a mere story even to the point of committing suicide through an



"Always the well seemed to draw her inexorably forward to its unknown locality."

imagined curse, she, Monica Weaving, was not going to yield to inherited "nerves."

She glanced at the open window as if debating whether to retreat, then threw back her head and set her jaw obstinately. Before going indoors she must vanquish this feeling once and for all. She would walk the full length of the terrace and back, just to prove that she was mistress of herself.

Trembling but determined, Monica moved along the moon-washed space. Every step she took as if advancing slowly but surely in the face of an enemy as slowly retreating before her. At last she reached the end of the terrace and turned, with a sobbing breath of relief that her self-imposed task was over. But in that instant the culminating wave of most deadly horror swept over



"She fought it wildly as if it were a live thing, her fists clenched and beating at it impotently."

her. The terrace, the moonlight, the very house seemed to threaten her! For one moment she wavered with hands upheld as though to ward off some ghastly thing, blind and deaf to all but its presence, then with a choking breath she dashed forward. The steps seemed her only way to safety; down them she fled and, turning from the gravel path beyond, she plunged into the great, high tangle of the shrubbery.

Rhododendron boughs slashed her face and body as she ran, crackling and beating in her wake. A sort of exhilaration of horror was upon her; at the same time she was dominated more than ever by a wild craving to get to the well. She felt a frantic desire to go on—on! Savagely she thrust past the great shrubs that impeded her, unaware, in her mad rage of fear, that her hands and arms were being torn and hurt. Once a huge bush stopped and held her obstinately. She fought it wildly as if it were a live thing, her fists clenched and beating at it impotently, her breath drawn in quick, dry gasps as if she were on the point of screaming aloud. But no sound came. Once, stumbling on the loose, soft mould, she was flung against the rough trunk of a tree. Her fingers clawed at the deep corrugations of the bark, tearing her nails. But always she plunged on and on. And always the well seemed to draw her inexorably forward to its unknown locality.

Without warning, her foot struck against something soft. Its unexpectedness nearly caused her to lose her balance. Swaying dizzily, she flung her arm out and downward in an unconscious effort to steady herself. Her hand fell upon the smooth softness of cloth—of a man's coat. With extraordinary abruptness the frenzy left her. For a moment she felt giddy and sick, numb from the revulsion of strong emotions. Curiously enough, she now had no sense of fear. Bending down, she gently touched the prostrate form, groping with careful fingers until they came into contact with a face. At the same instant the man stirred slightly. She heard a groan and, mingled with it, the murmured word "Monica!"

With a stab of horror she recognised the voice of her lover. "Donald! Donald!" she cried insistently, kneeling down beside him. "What has happened? Oh, Donald, wake up and tell me what has happened to you!" Her voice broke on a sob of apprehension.

Again she felt a slight stirring under her hand; again she heard a groan. Then

slowly and with an immense effort Donald Hames moved and sat up. Blindly in the darkness the girl put her arms round his shoulders to give him some support. She stiffened all her muscles in an endeavour to control a fit of trembling that had seized upon her. Then he spoke again, feebly but coherently.

"Monica darling, is it you?"

Unable as yet quite to master her feelings, she nodded silently, forgetting that in the deep obscurity he could not possibly see her gesture. However, after an instant's pause, rather to gain strength than to wait for a reply, he went on speaking.

"Will you feel in the pocket of my coat—the left-hand one? You'll find some matches there, dear."

Keeping one arm still round him, she sought swiftly with the other hand until she found the pocket and in it the box of matches. Donald Hames took them gently from her.

"I'll strike one," he said, and she noted thankfully that his voice was firmer. "I'm better now. I think I tripped over something and fell and cut my head."

As he spoke he lit a match. They gazed at each other, blinking painfully in the little, sudden illumination. There was a nasty cut on Hames's forehead, and blood dripped down his face and jaw; nevertheless, he was able to smile reassuringly at Monica.

Just as the match flickered out she gave a low cry, seized the box from his hand and struck another light with hasty, trembling fingers.

"Donald, look!" she whispered.

Immediately beside them, dimly visible in the glimmer of the little flame, was a low, circular rim of stone enclosing a pit of darkness.

Monica's lips moved stiffly. "The well!" she breathed. "It was calling me to-night! I had to come! . . ."

Donald Hames put his arms round her. "At least it was exerting no malign influence over you, my darling," he said, "since it was calling you to come and find me here. I came to look for it—a stupid thing to do in the dark, but our conversation had made me curious about it—and I suppose I stumbled over something and hit my head upon the edge of it. I must have been lying right along the rim. If you hadn't come I might unconsciously have shifted further the other way and fallen over and down."

Monica clutched the lapels of his coat.

"Oh, my dear——" She tried to say more, but speech failed her.

He held her closely, bending his face nearer to hers in the darkness.

"But, darling," he said, "don't you see that now the spell is broken? All those women of your family who were drawn here by that uncanny lure were drawn to disaster and death; but this new, wonderful love that is between us drew you, too—a

love that was stronger than the spell—and it brought you here to save and not to lose life."

Her hands still clinging to him, she turned once more in the direction of the well. "It called and called," she said very softly, "and now that I have answered this once, for good instead of ill, its power has gone. I *know* that it can never call again."



## THE SEVEN NEEDS.

**S**EVEN needs hath man, or else his life will rust;  
 Seven hopes he hath to keep him from the dust;  
 Seven spells he hath to charm the last disgust.

The progress of the months must bring to birth  
 In timely rank the jocund fruits of earth,  
 Lest his unstable body break with dearth.

Upon his eyelids duly must a seal  
 Fall, soft as snow yet warm as flowers which feel  
 The unshaded sun, that each day's wounds may heal.

From lark-song unto owl-cry he must be  
 Active amid the vast activity  
 Of forces which are he, yet more than he.

He must be one in labour with his kin,  
 And shepherded in comely discipline;  
 The stars make music, not unrhythmed din.

Then must he have, lest life's clear beat should fail,  
 And beauty, which alone is joy, grow pale,  
 Peace, nor set hands on war's unharvesting flail.

But there must be a sign above his way,  
 A pillar of fire by night, a cloud by day,  
 A Spirit to awe him and to whom to pray.

And there must be a human hand to lie  
 In his, a human answer to his cry,  
 A kiss to kindle him and sanctify.

O Muses, move her, lest the poet die!

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

# THE GRIP AND THE STANCE

By BERT SEYMOUR

Winner of "The News of the World" Tournament, 1921, the Croydon and District Professional Alliance Cup, 1920, and the Essex Championship Cup, 1922

(In a chat with Clyde Foster)

Illustrated from action-photographs of Bert Seymour by Percy G. Luck, and diagrams

## THE "OVERLAPPING" GRIP.

I RECOMMEND you to grip the club in the way that is approved by nearly all professionals and leading amateurs—with the thumb of the left hand in the palm of the right hand, and the little finger of the right hand laid over the forefinger of the left hand. This is called the overlapping grip. Harry Vardon is generally credited with its introduction. The object is to bring the two hands into a sort of clasp that causes them to work together and not against each other, as might happen when they are detached.

It is, however, true that great golfers could be named, mostly of the older school, who do not use the overlapping grip. But they are not one in ten—I was going to say one in a hundred—to the "overlappers." That is why I advise beginners to adopt the overlapping at once, for good and all. Do everything in the best way known at the start of your golf. It will feel awkward at first, but you will very soon become accustomed to

it, and then you will not want to try any other grip.

## THE "INTERLOCKING" GRIP.

There is a very similar way of gripping that is called the "interlocking" grip. Here, again, the thumb of the left hand is placed in the palm of the right hand, but instead of the little finger of the right hand being laid over the forefinger of the left hand, it falls between the forefinger and the middle

finger, while the forefinger of the left hand lies between the little finger and the third finger of the right hand.

In this way these fingers are locked for the same purpose as in the case of overlapping, namely, to keep the two hands working together as one. A fair proportion of prominent golfers adopt this grip. I believe it is very popular with Americans. Both Mr. Ouimet and Gene Sarazen use the interlocking grip. I have experimented with both, and decided in favour of the overlapping grip.



GRIP AND STANCE FOR SHOT WITH PAFKY.

*This being a more upright club, the ball is nearer than for a shot with brassie.*

### FLEXIBILITY OF THE WRISTS.

There is, however, another aspect of the grip—and a much more important one—to which I should like to invite your serious attention. I am referring to the degree of firmness with which the club should be held. When addressing the ball, and during the upward and downward swings, the club should be gripped equally firmly with both hands; but when my club lies horizontal across the right shoulder at the top of the full swing, so slackly do I hold it that a child could pull it out of my hands. The reason for this is that I want to have my wrists in position to come down with a flick and exercise the function that belongs to the wrists. Were I to grip with grim tightness, all the “flick-power” would be gone from the wrists. In fact, I might as well not have wrists or elbows or flexible muscles.

Golf, I repeat, and shall keep on repeating, is an art, and the wrists are the principal means of demonstrating it. I have seen a muscle-bound giant of six feet three, who could lift enormously heavy weights and perform incredible feats of strength, make so poor a show at golf after years of striving that he positively gave the game up in disgust, confessing himself thoroughly beaten by it. The little ball mocked at that giant's strength.

### THE STANCE.

A moment's thought will convince you that the stance in golf is very important—so important that it must receive some preliminary attention with regard to its general aspect before the detailed instructions which will be found desirable in connection with the use of each specific club.

I know an old professional who teaches



GRIP AND STANCE FOR A PUSH SHOT WITH CLEEK OR IRON.

*The ball is nearer the right foot and the hands a little in front of the club-head.*

that the stance is practically everything, after the first principles have been applied.

In a general way, the thing to attend to is that you stand comfortably. You feel just right for hitting the ball. That is very good, so far as it goes. But as I look at your stance I ask myself where the ball is going when you have hit it. Often a pupil thinks he is standing correctly for the required line when his position is quite wrong. But he will feel both comfortable and confident as soon as he has made some good drives.

The teacher of the violin or piano does not let a pupil play as he pleases. There is always some drudgery at the beginning of an art. And golf is an art, if ever any game was. Yet it is true of golf that it fascinates from the first. The most enthusiastic

## STANCES

players are the beginners. Few take it up and drop it.

Well, now, stand square for the fairway.

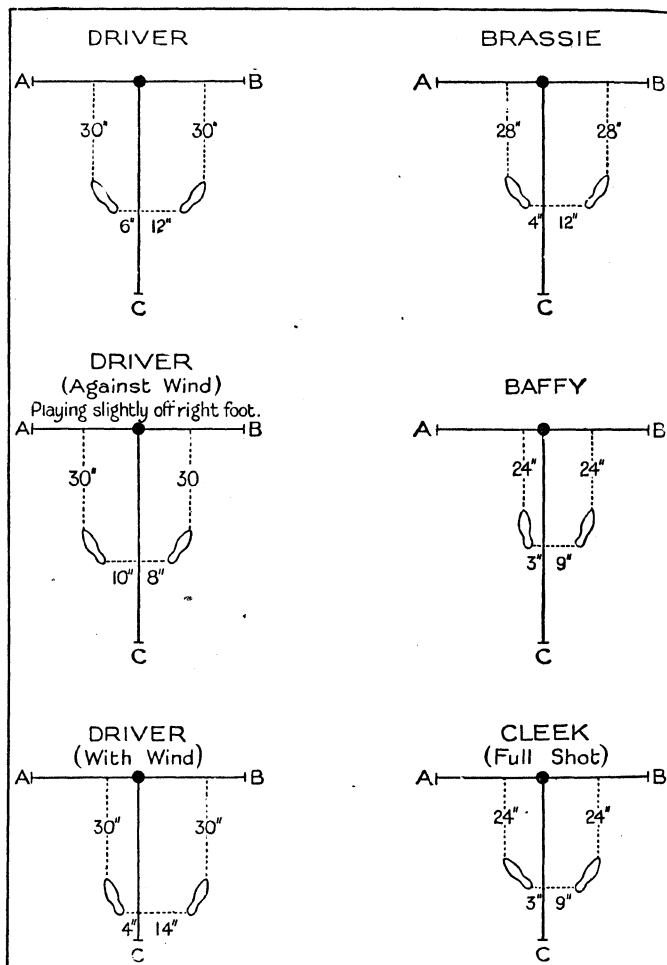
When you have advanced in the game, and begin to play for a "pull" or a "slice," certain slight alterations may be made in your stance. But these things do not matter at present. They do not matter much at any time.

One of the greatest golfers that ever lived says that more is lost than gained by trying to pull or slice. When you can drive the ball in a clean, straight fashion, there is little need to trouble about much else.

The stance must be such as will enable you to bring the middle of the club-head to the ball, so that it follows straight through. If the feet are placed in such a way that the hands come across the ball, the stance is obviously wrong. A square stance reduces the margin of error to a minimum. Therefore, I say, stand square—that is, so that a straight line drawn from the right to the left toe would point down the middle of the fairway in the line of the flag that flutters in the distance. The correct distance of the feet from the ball may be measured by placing the head of the club in the position for striking the ball; the top of the shaft should then just reach a little way past the knees. The hands should be kept low.

Whether this stance should be a close one or a wide one would depend upon which, in your case, produces the best results. Experiments will settle this simple matter. It largely depends upon such considerations as your stature and suppleness.

Good driving is impossible with stiff legs and with both feet glued to the ground. You have only to watch somebody else doing this to see how awkward it is. The knees must bend and the heels rise a little at the right time.



## SOME HELPFUL DIAGRAMS.

It has been truly said that no professional golfer, however machine-like he plays, would be likely to perform three consecutive shots, with any club, from exactly similar stances. Nevertheless, it is true that, in the main, his stances would be alike. The only difference would be a matter of an inch or two. I advocate the square stance as being the best for the generality of golfers, and especially for beginners.

The diagrams here appended should, I think, prove helpful, but need not be slavishly followed. Stature and length of arms must be taken into account, and stance must be adapted accordingly.

I am of medium height—about 5½ feet in my golfing shoes—but few stand wider or

farther from the ball than I do. I plant myself on the tee in the position that makes for long hitting.

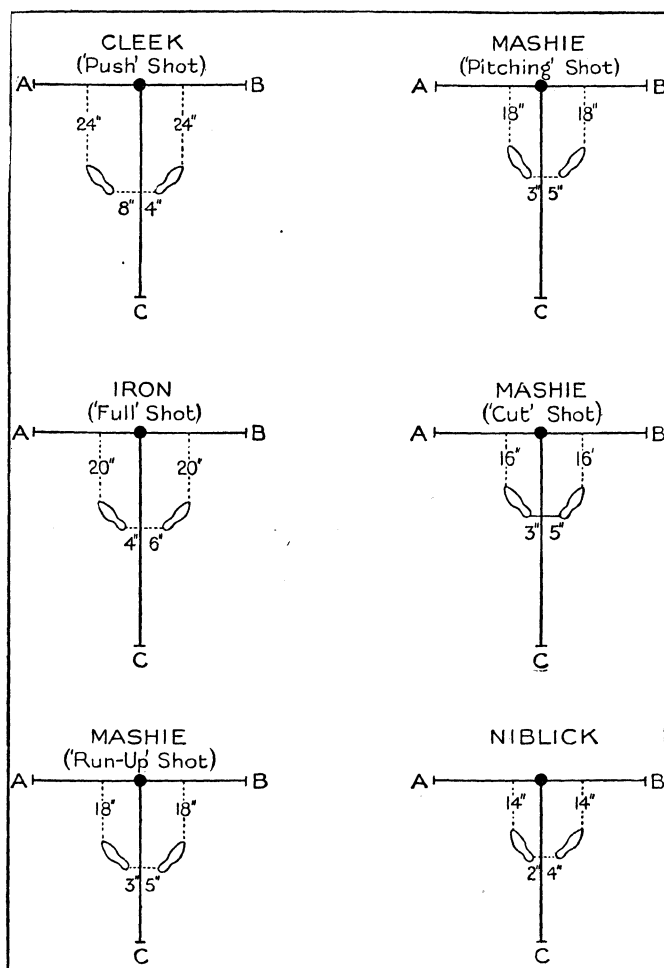
Length has always seemed to me of great importance. It is surely the ambition of every golfer to drive a long ball.

Carefully measured, my stance for the drive is 39 inches from the ball, with heels 18 inches apart and toes pointing outwards. A straight line drawn from the ball to my feet passes 6 inches to the right of the left heel and 12 inches to the left of the right heel.

From the driver, all the way through the other clubs, these distances are proportionately shortened, as the "lie" and length of the clubs warrant. When I come down to the putter, my heels are placed close together for the pendulum putt.

The best results will accrue from the graduation of these stance distances, as set forth in the accompanying diagrams. One can hardly stand too closely for all kinds of shots with mashies, mashie-niblicks, or niblicks.

## STANCES





# THE SUBSTITUTE

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY H. FORSTER

IT was with no look of radiant happiness that Kingswear entered the dining-room of the quiet little hotel off the Strand which he had made his headquarters on his return to London two days since. Being a young man—if one is young at thirty-four—of temperate habits and easy conscience, he was generally cheerful in the early morning, and able to begin the day with porridge, which is a sure sign of happiness and virtue.

Finding no letters on his plate, he remembered that the red baize board outside the office was the proper place to look for them, and he went out and returned empty-handed, with a frown on his bronzed forehead.

There were many reasons for this obvious lack of gaiety. The prodigal, after twelve years' exile, had returned home with a sufficient fortune to allow him to buy his own fatted calf. He had toiled hard in rough places, and had now come home to enjoy himself. For twelve years he had visualised London as a sort of earthly Paradise. He had shed happy tears at the thought of being thrown out of the Empire once again. He had pictured life in the Metropolis as one great glad Boat Race night.

But there had been no gripping of friendly hands, no smiles from familiar faces, grown only a very little older, surely. He had found neither *joie de vivre* nor an old friend.

All these years he had kept up his subscription to the highly respectable club which had been his father's, and he had spent part of the previous evening entombed in it, without knowing a soul. He had spoken to half a dozen members and been snubbed by all but one little man who was too nervous to be ungracious; but, on his referring to some of his fellow-members as "these stiffs," the little man had coughed and departed hastily. Kingswear was vaguely aware that life had changed him, and made him a fish out of water in that

conventional institution. Bonhomie and carelessness of address are the first two social vices one learns in places where neighbours have perforce to be friends. He could not stand the club, and the club would hardly suffer him gladly. Moreover, London itself showed him a stranger's face and had turned a cold shoulder upon him.

But these were not the worst of Kingswear's troubles. A little more than twelve years since, just after he had been sent down from Cambridge for conduct subversive to the discipline of that University, his grandfather, who was also his guardian, had banished him to a vicarage in the depths of the country, while considering what it were best to do with a young man who was evidently predestined to come to a bad end. Ultimately, Grandfather Kingswear offered him his choice between a stool in an office, with forgiveness if he worked hard enough, and a hundred pounds down "and I wash my hands of you."

Kingswear, in a fit of pique, permitted his grandfather to wash his hands, and booked himself a passage to Cape Town. But meanwhile he had been at the vicarage long enough to fall in love with his host's elder daughter Molly, and there was a understanding between them that he should come back and marry her as soon as he had achieved fame and fortune.

Poor Molly! The image of her had faded long since from a heart which had loved her ardently enough after the fashion of twenty-two. For it is the privilege of Youth to believe that his first love is different from all other first loves and made of durable stuff. But Molly served her purpose in that she sent him out to face life full of ambition, determined to carve a future which she could share with him.

The inevitable followed. They wrote long letters by every mail at first. Then the letters shortened as the intervals between them lengthened. At last, after four years, they ceased altogether.

But Kingswear was a man of his word. He had plighted his troth to Molly, and now that he had returned, and could offer her comfort, even luxury, he was willing to fulfil his part of the bargain.

He was willing, but far from eager. He could think of her now without the least emotion. She was his own age. He could picture her now grown stouter or thinner—certainly one or the other. The freshness of youth would all be gone from a face which he had once known no better than to worship. No longer would there be magic on her lips. He would find her a travesty of the girl who had innocently cheated him, according to the way of Nature. But he would marry her! Oh, yes, he would marry her if she were still living. And if she were still unmarried at thirty-four, would she be likely to refuse an old love with a very presentable fortune?

The grudgingly faithful lover had written to her immediately on landing in England, and asked if he might come down and see her. The answer took the form of a telegram which had arrived the day before, saying that she would meet the four o'clock train on the morrow. That morrow was now to-day, and Kingswear was beginning seriously to face the prospect of meeting her.

But there was no letter from her that morning, and he was puzzled. He dared hardly hope that it was a sign of her indifference. If she had not wanted to see him, she would not have telegraphed to him to come down. Then a solution occurred to him. The mail left the village post office very early, and might easily be missed by a woman who had set herself to write a long and ardent letter.

Kingswear's frown deepened as this thought occurred to him, and he shook his head moodily at the porridge, for which he had very little appetite that morning.

## II.

KINGSWEAR took no luggage with him to Hinkley Beeches, since he realised that its absence would provide him with an excuse for not staying the night. If, on the other hand, too much pressure should be brought to bear upon him, he could borrow pyjamas from the Vicar and buy himself a tooth-brush.

It was a gloriously fine afternoon, and the glare of sunlight through the windows of the compartment made reading difficult, so that he spent most of his time gazing moodily out upon the swiftly-moving

panorama of the landscape. Once he had known that reach of the line intimately, and the names of little stations jogged his memory like snatches of old songs. It was as if the train were carrying him back to his boyhood across the lost years, but he felt little sentimental exaltation. It was also carrying him back to the arms of a woman whom he had outgrown, a woman who was now a stranger to him.

Kingswear knew that he was a fool; he knew that nobody outside a novelette, or a confirmed reader of them, would regard a boy's promise as binding after twelve years; he knew that not one man in a thousand would consider that he had compromised his honour if he had never embarked on this fool's errand. After all, Molly had given him his chance by dropping him as gracefully and gradually as he had dropped her. But there was a streak of pig-headedness in the man. He had given his word and he would stick to it. He had built up a great reputation for being a man of his word.

As the train approached Hinkley Beeches, he noticed that Jerry the builder had been at work. Hideous new bungalows were frequent blots upon the landscape. But the long village street, visible as the slowing train passed between the gates of the level crossing, looked the same as ever, and the little station, with its background of poplars, presented no new feature to him. And as the train stopped he reflected a little bitterly on the cruelty of Time, which had changed nothing so much as his own heart and the woman who was there to meet him.

He got out. There was scarcely a soul on the platform, save the guard and a porter who was rolling churns towards the van. Only one female figure could he descry, and this was a young girl's, coolly dressed in blue and white, standing by the miniature bookstall. Her head was turned away from him—she was scanning the coaches at the rear end of the train—but a glance convinced him that she could not be Molly. It was a staid, matured figure for which he looked anxiously and found not. Then he took heart. She had been too indifferent to write; perhaps she was even too indifferent to reach the station in time to meet the train.

Then the girl at the bookstall turned her head and looked towards him. It was Molly, after all.

Their recognition was mutual, and they hastened towards each other. For a moment

he was thankful that the presence of others precluded too warm a greeting. Then he lifted his hat, and gave his hand and said awkwardly: "Why, hullo, Molly!" And she said: "Hullo, Jack!" And they gazed at one another awkwardly.

But there was a quality of amazement in Kingswear's stare. By some miracle, the woman who was smiling shyly into his face had remained a young girl. She seemed not to have changed since the moment of their tragic good-bye on that very station. She might have stepped straight to him across the years, as the lad in the fairy tale covered the miles in his seven-leagued boots. He searched her face frankly for the little tell-tale marks of the thirties, for signs of the little extraneous aids to the preservation of youth which the sunlight shows up so mercilessly. He searched, and found neither, and, being suddenly conscious of the silence between them, uttered a short laugh.

"I hardly know what to say to you, Molly."

"No. How does one greet after all these years?" she laughed. "Let's help one another out. . . . I think they want your ticket, Jack."

A porter was lingering at his elbow. Kingswear handed over his ticket, and together they passed out of the station. On the way he inquired after her father and her younger sister.



"She lowered her head and her shoulders heaved. He thought at first that his words had moved her to tears, and he was suddenly startled and resentful to find that she was laughing."

"Oh, father's just the same as ever—  
younger if anything. Everybody calls him  
a wonder. You won't see any change at all."

"And Daphne?"

"You won't see her, but you wouldn't  
know her if you did. But of course you don't  
know. Daphne's married."

"Married!"

"A long time now. You do look sur-  
prised. She's twenty-two. She married  
Kenneth Swindon. But I don't think you  
ever met him."

"Swindon. Isn't that the name of the  
brewers?"

"Yes, he's one of the sons. They live  
only eight miles away, so we see them quite  
often. Well, Jack, what do you want to  
do?"

Her tone was not exactly off-handed. It  
was quite friendly, but it was as if eleven  
hours rather than eleven years had elapsed  
since their last meeting.

"Do?" he repeated blankly.

"Are you tired after your journey? If  
not, we might have a walk. There's no  
reason for going straight home, unless you  
want to. Father isn't in. He had to go over  
to Kelmer to meet the Bishop at lunch. He  
won't be back much before six. But I  
expect you want some tea."

"No, thanks. I don't take it—at least,  
I never really want it. Yes, let's go for a  
walk, Molly. Let's walk to Millmer Pool.  
I've—I've a lot to say to you."

All the while his eyes were upon her. His  
boyish ardour had reawakened in a moment,  
and his anxiety had shifted from one cause  
to another. The woman was an incarnate  
miracle. Time had robbed her of nothing.  
And because she was in every respect the  
self-same girl he had left, the old magic  
reclaimed him. The years, which seemed  
to have taken nothing from her, gave back  
the love they had stolen away from him.  
He could scarcely believe his recent mis-  
givings; already, after the fashion of human  
nature, he was beginning to disbelieve that  
he had really entertained them. Already  
he saw himself as the faithful lover of light  
and improbable literature, returning after  
many years with a heart unchanged.

"Well," said Molly, "tell me all the news.  
How have you been doing?"

"Well enough to settle down in England  
now," he answered, trying not to speak  
too complacently. "I told you I shouldn't  
come back until I'd made good."

"You've changed a good deal," she  
remarked critically.

"Have I?" he asked, a little piqued.  
The mirror had told him very little about  
that.

"It's only to be expected after all this  
time. But I should have known you any-  
where."

He turned to her abruptly.

"You know, Molly, you're perfectly  
amazing! But I suppose everybody  
must have told you that."

"Am I? Why?"

"Because you haven't altered a day.  
Forgive me, but I've learned to put things  
crudely, and—I can't help knowing your  
age. It's absurd to think that you have a  
married sister twelve years younger than  
yourself."

She laughed.

"At least," she said, "you haven't  
forgotten how to pay compliments. We  
lead a quiet life here, as you know. There  
isn't much wear and tear."

"Still," he said, "you're wonderful."

She laughed again.

"How did you expect to find me?  
Old and staid? Oh, I'm staid enough,  
Jack, but thirty-four isn't ninety, after all,  
and if a girl takes care of herself, there is  
no reason why she shouldn't keep young."

By this time they had passed through the  
short village street and were climbing uphill  
along a narrow road which ran between  
steep wooded banks. Kingswear was one of  
the most bewildered men upon whom the  
sun shone that afternoon. He now loved  
where he had feared he would scarcely  
tolerate, and wanted to pick up the threads  
where they were broken eleven years before.  
He wanted to make love to the woman  
beside him, and it was not easy; even  
the seclusion of the lane did not help him.  
He was as shy of her as ever he had been  
before their first kiss, and she, on her side,  
seemed in no ways anxious to meet him  
half-way. Her consummate ease and  
freedom from restraint seemed to suggest  
that she had now no more than friendship  
to give him, and his heart cried out at the  
injustice. Merciful Heaven, were *all*  
women fickle?

"Tell me all the news," he said, for the  
sake of something to say.

"There really isn't any to interest you.  
Life has jogged on just the same as ever.  
A few of the old people are dead. Dr.  
Green has sold his practice to a Dr. Lawson  
and gone to some place near London.  
Emmy, our old housemaid, is now married  
to Cromb, the pastrycook. Stone, the

farmer, has gone bankrupt. I really think that's about all. But I want to hear about you. You, at least, must have a lot of news."

"I? I served five more years than Jacob, Molly. They've been lonely years. I never had much fun. I went out with one object—to earn money as quickly as I could and then come back for—a certain person, Molly. I've kept one vision before my mind all the while—a girl who loved and trusted me and promised to wait for me. Never once have I looked beyond her, or to right or left. All those years, Molly, I have followed a star."

Self-deception is a rare comfort. At the time the man really believed what he was saying. He spoke out of his heart, without feeling in the least a hypocrite. His companion answered him in quick, matter-of-fact tones, as if anxious to drown the sentimental note.

"But what business have you been in? I want to hear all about it, Jack. You haven't been a—a very good correspondent, you know."

"Oh," said Kingswear a little sullenly, "I'll tell you all about that if you really want to hear it."

And he proceeded to tell her.

### III.

MILLMER POOL was a small lake fed by the river through an old sluice gate, the goal of many a country walk, and beloved of anglers and picnic parties. Kingswear found it unchanged. The same blue sheet of water smiled up at the sky. The same paths wound along the wooded, bird-haunted banks. He had not even to close his eyes to believe that he was walking there with Molly when the world, as he knew it, was very young indeed.

He stopped at a fallen tree, now half rotted away, and suggested sitting down. Molly sat down meekly, folding her hands in her lap. Kingswear cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Molly, do you know why I suggested coming here?"

She shook her head.

"Can't you guess? Don't you remember what happened here?"

"No," she answered indifferently.

"Molly, you can't have forgotten. It was here that I told you for the first time that I—I cared for you."

"Oh?" she said, still indifferently, but with a slightly heightened colour, "*That!*"

"Yes, *that!*" Pique made his voice sound angry. "A small thing, but I thought you might have remembered it. However, I won't pursue the subject if you'd rather I didn't. You've been showing me pretty plainly that—that there's a great deal you don't want to remember."

She turned and regarded him steadily.

"Jack, there's—something I want to ask you."

"Yes?"

"Why did you write? Why did you ask to come down?"

"If your memory were a little better," he retorted coldly, "you would not need to ask that."

"Meaning that you still want me?"

"I'm not a person who changes, Molly," he answered reproachfully.

"Yet your letter wasn't very—enthusiastic."

"Well, I didn't know what had happened to you. You might have been married, for all I knew."

"I see! And if I had been?"

He leaned towards her.

"I think," he said, "it would have broken my heart!"

She moved an inch or two further away from him. Her gaze was bent downwards and her eyes troubled.

"Jack," she said, "think again. It's quite impossible for you to love me all these years. We're almost strangers, you and I!"

He got up and began to pace the ground in front of her, a picture of heart-broken dignity and righteous indignation.

"And this," he cried, "after all my years of toil and waiting! I was a fool, of course! I ought to have known more of women. I thought you were different, though, Molly. I did trust you!"

"You mean to say," she murmured in a low, troubled voice, "that you've really loved me all these years?"

"All these years!" he repeated, implicitly believing his own words.

"Then why did you stop writing?"

"Why did *you*?" he retorted.

"No, I'm asking you. You are saying that you've never stopped loving me all these years. Why did you stop writing?"

"Partly because you did, I suppose. And I didn't want you to feel tied to me. Suppose anything had happened to me? Or suppose I never made enough to come home again? I—I had to consider your future, Molly."

He could believe that now. Not a single word he had uttered was a conscious lie.

"And you still—love me?"

"More than ever," he cried fervently, "a hundred times more than ever, Molly!"

"Yes?"

"Don't you care for me a little still?"

"I don't know," she murmured.

"You don't know?" he repeated, and groaned aloud. "There, there, my dear," he added magnanimously, "you can't help it. I was a fool to hope that you would still care. We were children at the time. I set you too hard a test."

"Yet you survived it. Be patient with me, Jack. Suppose you'd found me old, changed. I—I might have been, you know. Would you still have loved me then?"

He turned to her then and spoke as all lovers have spoken since the beginning of time, believing, like the other millions, that he spoke the truth.

"Molly, it was never just your beauty that I loved. It was you yourself. That is the You I love now—the You that will never change. You will grow old in time, your hair will whiten, Time will set his seal upon your face, but I shall never notice these things. Beauty is very shallow, but love is always looking below the surface, Molly. Molly dear, if you've really stopped loving me, don't you think you could start again?" She lowered her head and her shoulders heaved. He thought at first that his words had moved her to tears, and he was suddenly startled and resentful to find that she was laughing. But there was little mirth in her laughter.

"Was ever a girl in such a fix as I am in?" she demanded, not of him, but of some imaginary audience. The remark had all the quality of a stage aside.

"I don't understand you," he said coldly.

"How should you? I met you to-day to let you down lightly."

"Thank you. I have borne a great deal already. You need not spare me."

"Well, I'm afraid when you meet Molly—the real Molly—you'll find that she's altered a great deal. But if that won't prevent you from loving her, I'm afraid——"

He stared at her in sudden horror.

"Molly! What are you saying?"

"I'm not Molly," she answered gently. "I'm Daphne."

"What!" he gasped.

"I'm Daphne. I expect you hardly remember me. But if you still really love Molly——"

He stared at her sullenly, angrily, trying to clutch at the tattered rags of his self-deception, which were falling from him and revealing to him what they were.

"Yes," he said, "you have made a fool of me! I am deeply grateful. It's a gracious welcome home!"

The shaft pricked her. She stood up and held out a hand.

"No! Oh, Jack, don't think I'm beastly! Let me explain. But if you really still love Molly, I've got to—to hurt you. Molly's married."

He uttered a hollow groan and tried to look heart-broken, but he was quite powerless to keep his face from lighting up with relief.

"It was she who married Kenneth Swindon. They're quite happy. None of us thought that you and she were ever really serious. And when you stopped writing . . . We never thought we should ever hear from you again. When your letter came yesterday morning, I thought it was for me, and opened it. It threw father and me into a fearful state. We both thought that, after all, you might have been in love with Molly all those years, and expected to find her waiting for you. And you weren't really, you know, otherwise you couldn't have mistaken me for her."

"Well, go on," Kingswear said grudgingly.

"So I wired to you to come down, and told father that I'd meet you at the station and explain matters to you. I didn't envy myself the task. And when you saw me you mistook me for Molly. Everybody says that I'm exactly like Molly was at the same age. And I let you continue to think it, because it gave me time to find out whether you really did care for Molly before I broke the news. And now I know you don't. A moment ago you thought you were in love with me."

"So I am!" he muttered.

"Please! Don't be absurd!"

He laughed suddenly.

"Daphne, what a lot of fools we all are! We are as an all-wise Providence made us, and we go through life trying to kid ourselves that we're something better. Five minutes ago I was patting myself on the back for having been so faithful to Molly. It would have been against Nature for boy and girl lovers to go on caring for each other in absence all those years. But give me the credit, Daphne—I did come back for her."

"Yes, you did come back. And I suppose you'd have married her against the grain if you'd been free."

"I suppose I should."

Still smiling, he took her hands.

"We're funny things, we men and women. We fall in love with types and ideas and often with love itself. You won't believe me when I say that I love you now. But be gentle with me, Daphne. I've played into your hands, and you can afford to be generous."

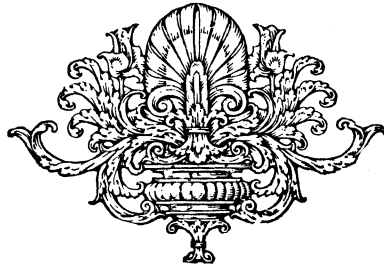
"I—I don't want to hurt you, Jack."

"At least I've been faithful after my fashion. You'll give me that? And I'm

an older man now, and know more about my own mind. I'm a lonely man, Daphne, and in love with Love, if you like. But for me you wear Love's face, and I want you, dear. I know, of course, that you can't care two straws about me, but you might in time, if you'd let me try to make you."

Looking down at her, he saw that her eyes were gleaming with sudden, bright, inexplicable tears, but her mouth was smiling.

"You're rather sweet, aren't you?" she whispered. "I don't see why you shouldn't try."

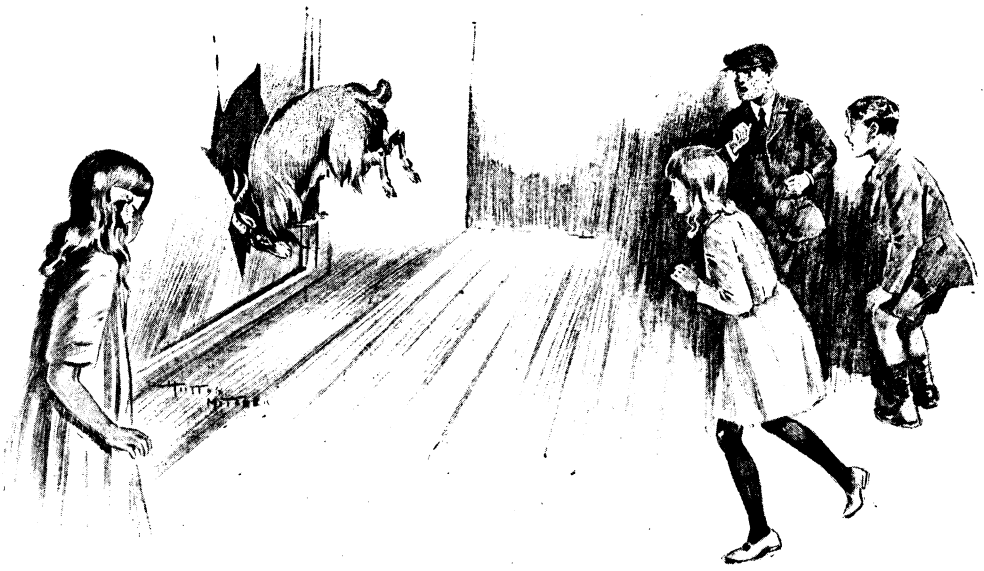


## THE MIRACLE.

**N**O more to you it flies,  
My swift and eager thought,  
Cleaving the startled skies,  
But with a broken wing  
Beneath your window lies,  
And learns as cripples ought,  
By grim experience taught,  
Humble to be, and wise.

Yet if some day of spring  
You, at your lattice high,  
Should see the poor maimed thing  
(Whose piteous state would bring  
Tears to the coldest eye),  
And question how and why,  
It yet might soar and sing,  
And vanish up the sky  
Beyond your beckoning,  
Needing nor gift nor grace,  
Healed in a moment's space!

MAY BYRON.



"He hurled himself through the tall ground-glass window."

# THE ANIMAL SHOW

By B. A. CLARKE

*Author of "A Free Hand," "Minnows and Tritons," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

PERHAPS it is well that usually troubles come not singly, because a single trouble, like an only child, can cause more anxiety than a large family. Edward West discovered this when organising an animal show in aid of the Bempton Hall Sunday-School library. Bempton Street, as everyone but conductors of the 87 'buses knows, is a turning off Trafalgar Road a mile Highgatewards from King's Cross. Edward, living in another part of London, had undertaken the librarianship at the request of his youngest aunt, who had taught a class there for fifteen years. On taking up his duties, Edward found that all the library books were divided into three parts: the cover, which slipped on and off like a girl's jumper; the pictures, which fluttered to the floor like butterflies when the book was opened; and reading matter, rarely complete. To raise money for one-piece books he announced, after getting the Superintendent's consent, an animal show to run for two days, afternoon and evening.

When Edward first buckled down to the task of preparing for it, his first notion was that it was too easy. Having the use of the hall free, he could scarcely help getting paying houses. Quite a bit of carpentry was needed, but this was undertaken by a half-dozen of the men's class as a labour of love. One point only was uncertain—the extent to which exhibitors would come forward. This was Edward's single trouble, the spoilt child he allowed to harass his days and disturb his nights with dreams of immense audiences confronted by empty benches, perches and pens, for, under the urge of this fear, he had enlarged the scope of his show until it included all animated Nature. Every time he had a nightmare he announced a new competition. Not content with making his net so fine-meshed that not even a tadpole could slip through it, he cast it more widely, appealing through fur and feather periodicals to London, to Greater London, to outer uttermost London, to compete at Bempton Hall.



Edward got no inkling of how his appeals were being met until the first night of the show, when, passing "The Red Fox" at the corner of Nile Street, midway between the Mission Hall and Trafalgar Road, a group of loafers stopped him. He wasn't alarmed. None of the Mission staff had ever been molested or even annoyed. Their spokesman now was a fat humbug called Seltzer.

"Good evening, sir. There's a bunch of strangers outside the Hall waiting to heckle you about the prizes. Now, you must make it clear to them that not one single penny will go to them, whether their dogs and cats is better than ourn or not. This is a show got up by a mission that exists by title-deeds and axe of Parliament solely for the use and benefit of those who live near it. And there's another point: the most valuable prize goes to the best animal shown, of whatever species, tribe, or persuasion. Am I right or am I wrong?"

"It is as you say."

"Well, will my Fred be allowed a fair chance of winning it?"

"Why not? What does he exhibit?"

"Silkworms, or, rather, hay silkworm, the mountain goat of his sister Susan having eaten the others. Why I asks is that one of the chaps as is waiting for you—he's a Nyde Park freethinker to my certain knowledge—reckons to win that there open prize with his bulldog. When I remarked that his bulldog would meet his master in Fred's silkworm, he ups and says that a silkworm isn't a nanim! Now, are you a-going to lend yourself to atheism like that?"

(The mountain goat, it may be explained, wasn't the property of Susan Seltzer or of anyone else. Years ago it had appeared in Bempton Street one morning, trailing behind it the broken shafts of a goat-carriage. Chased by the children, it escaped to the embankment of the Mid-London Railway, where, gradually shedding the reminder of its old servitude, it returned to Nature. From the library window Edward had often watched the goat on the railway embankment, cropping its grass and cinders.)

Edward pacified the locals temporarily. The strangers who surrounded him almost at the Mission door were more dangerous.

"Well," said the youth, trying to appear at his ease, "what is the trouble?"

"There ain't none at present," said a broken-nosed man, "and there won't be none either if this show is run on the straight; but if there's any dirty work, such as giving prizes to a bunch of praying Jews

for animals that don't deserve them, there'll be trouble of the worst sort, and don't you forget it."

"The judging will be strictly impartial," said Edward. "You can all bank upon that."

He tried to break through, but his questioner caught his arm.

"Half a mo. O've yer got to judge the bulls?"

"We didn't invite cattle," said Edward, alarmed.

"You're a fine one to run a live show, I don't think! If you was a dog-lover, you'd know that bulls are bulldogs."

The dog-lover, who smelt strongly of aniseed, spat contemptuously.

"Is it Bert Rumbold? That's what I am going to get out of you?"

"Do you want Bert Rumbold?" asked Edward, feeling his way.

"Want him! Me want *him*? That's a good one! Why, Bert's had his knife into me for years!"

"I'll let you all into a secret. I have had no dealing with Rumbold."

They let him pass into the building.

Edward found that all the accommodation for live-stock provided in the three rooms given up to him was crowded to the uttermost. Local exhibits alone would have sufficed. There were no less than six pet lambs! The exhibits from outside were even more remarkable for quality than for number—dogs so good as to prove their exhibitors bad, for only in one way could such shabby folk have acquired them; cats at whom kings might have looked; canary Carusos; polyglot parrots, and goldfish more valuable than gold. Edward was ashamed to look these aristocrats in the face, recalling his very homely arrangements for judging them—his aunt for the cats; for the dogs one of the article clerks from the office on the strength of his owning a half-bred fox-terrier; and himself for the rest. He realised now that such haphazard appraisement would cause a riot. By hook or by crook he must secure expert judges. But where look for them? Whittington Market suggested itself: someone there should be in a position to direct him. Fees would be asked—possibly stiff fees—but that needn't daunt him. He had just learnt that nearly a hundred people had attended the afternoon private view (admission 2s. 6d.), instead of the score or so ladies from the squares they had expected. Edward's bane, the ferocious keenness of the outside exhibitors, had furnished purchase

money for the antidote. All might yet be well. But how maddening to know that, but for his surrender to false alarms, this real peril would never have arisen!

The clock struck.

"Stoner, admit the crowd."

"There's hardly a crowd yet, sir; it's too early for many. But before the evening's out you will have the biggest crowd ever seen in Bampton Hall, and the queerest-tempered."

The first man Edward addressed in Whittington Market, when he went there the following morning, sent him to Mr. Wallbrook, a wholesale butcher, who had two fine shops on the main avenue and a humbler one at the back of the market for the sale of pets. Mr. Wallbrook was tall, fair, and forty, but lean as a greyhound, well-groomed and exquisitely turned out, everything he wore proclaiming, not aggressively, but in a cultured undertone, that it came from Bond Street. He radiated sincerity and good-will. Here, Edward felt, was the one man in London able and willing to rescue him from his predicament.

"Well, my boy," said the wholesale butcher genially, "what can I do for you?"

Edward told him everything. "Perhaps you think I am making a mountain out of a molehill," he said, concluding.

"Indeed I don't. The situation is very ugly. From what you tell me, I judge that the men you fear are, if not criminal, of the dangerous class, and that they have been betting heavily amongst themselves upon the results of your competitions. Incentive them by ridiculous judging or by the favouritism which your local ne'er-do-wells expect, and perhaps have threatened the strangers with, and they'll wreck your premises. And one can't deny them a measure of sympathy. When they were invited to exhibit in your show, there was a tacit promise that the best animals should win. You have ignored this, and been prepared to make statements as to the comparative merits of competitors without knowing or caring whether they were true or false."

"I can see that I have acted very wrongly," said Edward humbly.

"Certainly you have acted *youngly*. A boy like you shouldn't be shouldering such a burden. Let me relieve you of it."

In dumb show he lifted an imaginary knapsack from the youth's back and affixed it to his own, making movements

with his shoulder-blades as if adjusting it. "There, that's better. You see how easily I carry it."

"What does this mean, sir?"

"That I take your place, accept full responsibility, appoint the judges and run the whole business. You won't need to worry about anything."

"Why should you do all this for me?" asked Edward, trembling.

"Because I enjoy helping lame dogs over stiles, which shows that I am normal. We are so made that we love doing it. To be unsympathetic a man must unmake himself. Look here, if you could get me out of a mess, would you?"

"Indeed I would."

"That makes us square, then, for in ethics nothing counts but intention. But you would like to hear my programme. First hire three judges for dogs, cats, and birds. I shall judge the odds and ends myself. For birds Joicey of Petticoat Lane hasn't an equal. I know I can get him. Half a dozen names occur to me for dogs and cats, but my first choices may not be available. However, I'll have the whole business fixed up before lunch, including a strong committee to hear complaints against our awards, and dismiss them with a caution. I will have them all assembled here at half-past three. You haven't a thing to do except be on deck at three-thirty and conduct us down to your Mission Hall. And now I would like to show you the other shop, my happy family, as I call it, to convince you that I have some qualifications for judging your animal freaks and side-shows, and for another reason that will appear."

As they walked across the market, Mr. Wallbrook explained the inwardness of his domestic pet business, which made such disproportionate demands upon his time, the profits being a mere drop in the ocean of his total tradings. It existed for the refreshment of his spirit as an oasis in a desert of carcasses, to which he could retreat and be reminded that the relations between man and the lower animals were not solely those of prey and preyed-upon, but friendship also was possible, and that there could be shown by one to the other loyalty and true service.

"But for my happy family, I shouldn't be able to help you, Edward, and, perhaps, shouldn't wish to. In the two shops we have just left I have made a fortune. That I haven't lost my soul in the process is

partly due to the little shop we are now on our way to."

But it wasn't so very little. True, it struck Edward at first as poky, but the number of cages and hutches it contained, tier above tier as they were, argued considerable

Mr. Wallbrook explained that the legend was for the mystification of the merely curious. Anyone who looked at his cage with a buyer's eye was told the truth that poor Tony had lost his tail in a farm machine.

"You might have claimed that Tony is unique," said Edward.

"He is alone the Arabian bird," quoted Mr. Wallbrook, whose intense love for all living things included poets. "And now for the second reason for bringing you here. Mike!"

At this hail, from the tiny office behind the shop a gigantic figure emerged miraculously, like a genie from a bottle. Edward had never set eyes upon such a man, six feet six at least, broad and so deep-chested as to seem almost inhuman. He had a forward stoop, and his disproportionately long arms, which hung down before him, extended to below his knees. His wrists were fringed with tufts of red hair.

"Mike, this is Mr. West. He is running an animal show at Bempton Hall. You are going to serve upon his committee this afternoon and evening. There are some rough people down there, but Mr. West

will see that they don't hurt you."

"Huh! Huh! Huh!" Mike coughed, making a hollow noise by drumming with his hand upon his huge chest.

Edward grinned. Before a committee of four gorilla-men objectors would sing very small indeed.

"I really must run back to the office now, sir," he said, "particularly as I am leaving shortly after three. Half-past three here, you said, didn't you? Oh, I



"Mr. Wallbrook was almost as professional."

floor-space. According to their kind, every tenant welcomed the debonair proprietor. Persian cats opened and closed their paws; pedigree pups adjourned interminable sham fights in the straw to press up to the bars to be stroked. A peacock screamed gleefully. Edward looked at this bird and was mystified. It was a mere wreck, having not even a vestige of a tail. Above its wicker cage was a card that read: "Arabian Peacock. *Pavo Arabiensis*, tailless. Very scarce."

do hope you will be able to get the judges!"

"Don't you worry. Just leave everything to me."

Mr. Wallbrook's party started off from

few minutes after four-thirty, by which time all the half-crowners were in. Using the back staircase, the committee were installed in the library without anyone but the hall-keeper having seen them. The



"The dog expert, Tom Barclay, from Barking, was known to dog showers."

Whittington Market at ten minutes to four, having been delayed by the late arrival of Joicey, the bird expert from Petticoat Lane. It consisted of Edward, Mr. Wallbrook, the three other judges and a committee of four, Mike, a slaughterman who was the next size to him, an explosive mate, and a Solomon Islander whom a benevolent fight promoter had civilised and steeped in Western culture and ringcraft. The poor naked head-hunter of yesterday to-day respected himself in the costume (complete even to the huge glass diamond in his scarf-pin) of the stage bookmaker.

They did not reach the Mission until a

library had a second door opening on the platform of the big hall.

The judges got to work quickly. One and all, obviously, were old hands, their decisions being swift, decisive, and authoritative. All the competitors knew Joicey of Petticoat Lane. The dog expert, Tom Barclay, from Barking, was known to dog showers, but not, like Joicey, universally. The cat judge (Edward hadn't caught his name) was an unknown, but no fair-minded man could doubt that he had spent his life with felines until his nature had become subdued to what it worked in. He had cat's whiskers, and eyes that blinked as if daylight troubled

them. He had it in him, one felt sure, to become a good mouser. Mr. Wallbrook was almost as professional. With the pet lambs he was, of course, on his own ground. As each class was judged, a rosette was affixed to the winner. Last came the open prizes. That for the best of all the exhibits fell to a blue Persian cat. The Barking expert growled at its not being given to one of the winning dogs. For a moment it looked as if the cat expert might scratch him.

With the announcement of this last and culminating award, the storm burst. Anæmic men miraculously achieved purple-facedness, thin Cockney voices boomed like fog-horns, fists and sticks were shaken menacingly. Edward's heart sank. Despite all the aid that had come to him so wonderfully that day, the mob had risen. But to Mr. Wallbrook's more experienced eye there was no mob; he saw isolated malcontents only, who were not swaying those around them. The good judging had done its work; what was left for the committee would be but child's play to them. He stood now on the platform, graceful, debonair, not alarmed at the disturbance nor even annoyed by it, but with a twinkle in his grey eyes and with hand upraised, checking it as one would some over-boisterous demonstration at a school breaking-up.

"Friends," he said, when the good-will of the majority at last secured him a hearing, "at great cost we have given you first-class judging, as good as you would get at the Crystal Palace, and in your hearts you all know it. Naturally some of you are dissatisfied, but do you feel that others besides yourself have been wronged, and do they feel it about you? Obviously not. The outcry arises from the proper prejudice everyone has for his own things. I say proper because I wouldn't give twopence for a man who could be impartial about his own dog or his own child. But we are not going to leave it at that. In the room on my right a committee is sitting to consider complaints—a strong committee. No, they can't be rushed; complaints will be taken one at a time, alphabetically. A—ant-eaters, armadillos. No A's? B's?"

"Bulldog, me!" shouted Edward's heckler of last night.

"Advance, bulldog. That door on the right, please."

The broken-nosed man flung open the door truculently, and then gave a squeal like a frightened rabbit's. Three minutes

later the agitator, extremely agitated, emerged, escorted by Mike, who laid a detaining hand upon him as he was descending the platform steps.

"Are ye satisfied now? Spake up so that the fine company can hear yer."

"More than satisfied."

With his disengaged hand Mike began to drum upon his chest gorilla-wise. The objector, alarmed at this, which, had he known Mike better, he would have been aware merely signified strong emotion, and was as often the sign of satisfaction as of anger, hastened to placate him more fully.

"Gentlemen, as an old exhibitor I can assure you that everyone has received more than justice. The judges have known what is right, and have done what is right. The awards do equal credit to their heads and to their hearts."

He was allowed to slip away. Down on the floor, gliding from group to group, he spread the knowledge of the committee's strength.

"Bullfinches!" shouted Mr. Wallbrook. "If there is any disgruntled bullfinch, now is the time for him to disgrunt."

He ran rapidly through the alphabet, getting but four more protests. They were all weighed and found wanting, to their makers' own delight, apparently, for returning from their interview with the committee, escorted either by Mike or the head-hunter, they one and all endorsed the verdicts against themselves enthusiastically.

When the afternoon session closed, high tea was served in one of the class-rooms for the helpers who were staying on to the evening meeting, including the committee, whose further services were retained, but proved not to be needed, and the judges, who, their work being completed, remained from curiosity. At table the judges and committee sat down together.

"I am afraid we have only ordinary food," said Edward's aunt apologetically. She presided, having Mr. Wallbrook, as the guest of honour, upon her right hand.

"Live wire that nephew of yours, Miss West; but he shouldn't be allowed to undertake such responsibilities."

"Great opportunities seem to come to him. So far he has always risen to them."

"Perhaps, but they are making a man of him before his time. When he came to me this morning, there were actually lines upon his forehead. I simply had to smooth them out; that's why I am here when I

should be attending to my own affairs. I can't let a boy look harassed; it's not natural."

The evening attendance was tremendous. All three rooms were chockablock, and when for the speeches and the prize-giving everyone flocked into the great hall, there wasn't room to breathe, which, perhaps, was as well, considering the atmosphere.

Mr. Wallbrook presided, proving himself an admirable speaker, with the gift—lacking which all other oratorical gifts are vain—of "getting it across." He jollied the locals out of their sulks at so many prizes having gone to outsiders, pointing out that in such competitions as pet lambs, white mice, goats and silkworms, Bempton Street had thrown the gage to Greater London and beaten her hollow. The crowning local triumph fell to Alice Brown, the daughter of the butcher at the foot of the street, with her pet lamb, the children of other butchers as far distant as King's Cross and Highbury having begged from their fathers the loan of sheep for this event. As the pretty child stood upon the platform, blushing waiting for her prize, Bempton Street rose to her, and "e'en the ranks of Tusculum could scarce forbear to cheer." The chairman, congratulating her, said that while her lamb might not rival Mary's in snow-whiteness of fleece, no doubt a much better leg of mutton could be obtained from it.

But the meeting was not to pass without disturbance. It may be remembered that the Seltzers had appropriated, for the period of the show at least, a masterless billy-goat who for years had been living its own life on the domain of the Mid-London Railway. It won a prize. When Susan Seltzer, a swarthy, slatternly young woman, came to the platform to receive it, there arose a furious demonstration against her from rivals who, as *bona fide* goat-owners, claimed the prize, and from local patriots who resented the removal of so picturesque a landmark. The Seltzers, backed by the Red Fox following, retorting after their kind, the audience divided into two hostile armies. The chairman hesitated, and in that moment Fate intervened and took the decision into her own hands. From the infant class-room in the basement came a terrific crash of breaking glass, children's shrill cries, and, a second later, a tremendous concussion outside the building.

While the prize-giving had been in progress, the other two rooms devoted to the show had not been actually deserted; there

were the exhibits, and the hall-keeper's children, who had been paid a few pence to give an eye to them. Most of the animals slept, and all were quiescent except the Seltzers' goat, who was pining for the railway, much as he had, at one time and another, suffered from it. His eyes were sore from the acrid smoke of its tunnels; the fountains of blazing cinders thrown up by its locomotives had burned bald patches on his coat; he had been bruised by Bank Holiday beer bottles, blown up by November fog signals, but, despite all this and much else, he longed to be back in it all again. And then came the shriek of the approaching main line express—the only main line train of the day taken round this loop. The goat stood quivering. This was the voice of his master, far more worshipful than any human master he had ever known, for it fed him bountifully, asking nothing in return. With a scream he hurled himself through the tall ground-glass window, alighting in the area, from which, in two bounds, he gained the yard behind the hall, bounded by the Company's fence. The frenzied creature charged this with such fury as to knock down a whole length of it. Uninjured by the terrific concussion, undazed even, he bounded up the embankment slope, reaching the top as the express rounded the bend. Dark forms were silhouetted at the windows, jettisoning, in readiness for the approaching terminus, all remnants of meals on the journey, apple cores, scraps of gristle, banana skins, fragments of too realistic rock cakes, all of which could be retrieved by intelligent nosings. What a generous master, what a life, was this!

When the interrupted prize-giving was resumed, Mr. Wallbrook's task was easy. "The disaster downstairs," he said, "found us quarrelling about the destination of our last prize. With the desertion of the prize-winner, all controversy ceases, for by our rules a prize-winner failing to remain until the show closes forfeits his prize. Mr. Cole, whose goat was the runner-up, gets the prize, and Miss Susan Seltzer the glory of having exhibited the best goat. Thus Box and Cox are satisfied. We will now sing a verse of the National Anthem."

When the chairman descended from the platform, he was surrounded by congratulators, foremost of whom was Miss West, who chaffed him with a vivacity that Edward thought was out of place in one who would never see thirty again.

"I can't help thinking, Mr. Wallbrook,

that you fancy yourself over this. Outwardly you are as the daisy, a 'wee modest crimson-tipped flower,' except that you seem to have done all the tipping, but there's a look in your bonny grey eyes that tells me you fancy yourself."

"Well, I do. Everyone has gone away from the hall satisfied, and that is what I set myself to accomplish. To entirely honest men every transaction is repugnant that does not benefit and satisfy every party to it."

"I say, you know, instead of a stand in Whittington Market you ought to be given a chair of Moral Philosophy at one of the universities."

"It is the only subject on which my opinion is worth anything; the only study that has ever attracted me. Perhaps even materially I should have done better to have followed my bent. The possibilities of the meat business are curtailed by half the world's being vegetarian. Everyone is interested in ethics."

"Mr. Wallbrook's taxi!" shouted the hall-keeper.

"Can I give anyone a lift as far as Charing Cross or Victoria? What, no one! I see, you are all dark and true and tender Great Northerners. Good-bye, Miss West. Good-bye, Edward. Look me up in the market sometimes."

"Good-bye, sir. I don't know how to thank you for turning what threatened to be a dishonourable fiasco into a thumping success."

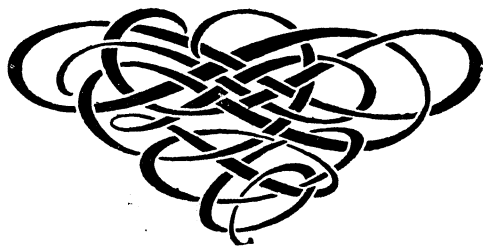
"How much will the library benefit?"

"I can't say until you let me have a statement of what you paid the judges and the committee."

"Regard that as my subscription to the library. It's no good saying you won't let me do this. You haven't any authority to refuse my contributions. Well, how much have you made?"

"At least forty-five pounds."

Actually it came out forty-seven pounds nine.



## HIDE AND SEEK.

**T**HE moon is blown through the silver sky  
By the wild and wandering wind:  
Like a girl on a swing she goes sailing by,  
And her laughter is left behind.

She hides herself in a web of cloud,  
But the wind is following fast;  
And he spies her there, and he calls aloud  
As he catches the moon at last.

And, hand in hand, through the silver sky  
Race the moon and the shouting wind:  
Like a lad and his lass they go leaping by,  
And their laughter is left behind.

BRIAN HILL.

# TABITHA RUTH

By FREDERICK SLEATH

ILLUSTRATED BY WILMOT LUNT

**J**IMMY GAY, confidence expert, is a clever young man, highly-educated, handsome and stylish, and many will be the crimes and misdemeanours on his charge-sheet when the police get hold of him, as in time, one supposes, they will; but for the most serious of all his crimes, the murder of his erstwhile confederate, Pinkie Green, he will never be required to stand his trial.

Dusky Joe has seen to that; Dusky Joe Laffré, keeper of a Thames-side boarding house Stepney way.

Dusky Joe's livelihood, fortunately for Jimmy, depends on his keeping his house free from undue police attention, so unduly sensitive are his usual boarders concerning this little matter. And when he found Pinkie lying still and spreadeagled on the floor of one of his back rooms, to make any fuss was the last thing that could possibly have occurred to him—with the river so near. Into the river went Pinkie, and up with the tide as far as Westminster, and down again as far as Blackfriars, where a river-police boat stopped him, not one of whose occupants was sorry.

"My aunt!" said Sergeant Brackbridge, eyeing the damage. "Pinkie has got *his* this time proper."

"And not half enough, too," growled Police Constable Simpson, who happens to be one of the most kind-hearted of men.

It can therefore be taken for granted that no sympathy need be wasted on Pinkie Green, who was the sneakiest of sneak thieves, a despicable creature, as many a man at present in gaol would testify. In fact, it was his reputation that killed him, for because of it Jimmy jumped to a certain conclusion, and his slim, strong fingers thereafter did their business very quickly.

What that conclusion was, this story may show. Also may be explained a point that will puzzle Jimmy to his dying day, namely, that the last expression on his victim's face was not of fright, nor pain, but sheer amazement. This said, Pinkie may be dismissed,

unwept and unhonoured, and, except for a casual mention here and there, henceforth ignored. In any case, in the undertaking planned by him and Jimmy, he was only the faintest of shadows athwart a shop door—the shop door of Isaac Meninski, maker of fine jewels, and a much more important character in this story.

Just as important, Claudie, his son, and Tabitha Ruth.

The three stay together above the shop, which is at No. 10, Lower Weston Lane, a quite reputable business thoroughfare. Sad to relate, Isaac is not quite so respectable. Nevertheless, he is a jeweller of renown, who cuts his own gems and sets to his own design, a skilled craftsman, an artist—make no mistake about it!—a Benvenuto Cellini, a master, who, if not employed by kings and princes, is employed by those who consort with them. And Claudie in time will be just as great an artist. Yet he would much rather have been a boxer. He might have attained his ambition, too. As a welter-weight, a year or two ago, he was very, very good, without doubt a coming champion. But above all things else he was, and is, a very good son, and he gave up the game out of regard for Isaac, who was growing old.

Only one condition he made—Tabitha Ruth: a home and immunity for the pair of them at No. 10.

This was an entanglement of which he would not rid himself. Strong the attachment between him and Tabitha, and it dated back to the very earliest days of his boxing career, to a night, in fact, on which she showed her interest in him in no uncertain way.

Unable to restrain her youthful enthusiasm, she came into his corner on the night he fought Tim McBeth, the Paddington Wonder, in a fight which he was not expected to win. But her presence made all the difference in the world, and after about the middle of the fourth round, The Wonder was no longer a wonder. What could Claudie do but keep her attached to his camp to win more



battles for him? Which she did. And how could he leave her, possibly to fall into another man's hands, when he returned to his father's home? What, moreover, could Isaac do but accept the condition? Great though his hatred was of cats, his need of Claudie was greater.

Tabitha Ruth was a cat—a beauty. Unfortunately for the harmony and goodwill of No. 10, she combined in her nature a lively bent for mischief with an exceedingly keen sense of humour, faculties which she sought to exercise at Isaac's expense as soon as she discovered his covert hostility. She took to lying in wait for him. At unexpected moments she would dart out from dark corners to claw the legs of his trousers or to take flying leaps at his coat-tails. And no sooner did she make the further discovery that his pet aversion was to her ensconcing herself on top of the shop counter—the end nearest the window was her favourite stance—than this seemed to become the end and aim of her existence. Away he would chase her: back she would come, again, and again, and again.

And her wiliness was diabolic, almost dementing. He would drive her out of the shop, he would see her skirmishing about outside fainting to return, he would stand in hiding by the door, ready to swat her as she entered; then suddenly he would find her ensconced on the counter, purring at him, return effected by another way.

Of course he complained; quite mildly at first, lest Claudie might take umbrage and depart along with her to the old sparring quarters, but becoming more and more minatory as the months went by and the prospect of a successful come-back for Claudie receded. His grievance became an obsession. He yelled and screeched at Tabitha in his sleep. And Claudie, wakened up and ill-tempered, cherishing a grievance also, for he understood his father thoroughly and resented his unsportsmanlike attitude, yelled back at him and mourned aloud his forsaken career, while from her resting-place and citadel on top of the canopy of his old-fashioned bed, Tabitha grinned and mewed.

It was a most unhappy state of affairs, but adamant Claudie remained. Neither threats nor entreaties would move him to give up his cat; nor even when his father took to prophesying evil, all manner of evil, fire, flood and pestilence, murder and robbery. At last, in the shape of Jimmy Gay, the evil came.

So Isaac said, anyway. Quick he was to identify Tabitha as the cause of the harm wrought by Jimmy. Even Claudie thought it a bit unfortunate that on the morning of the disaster she should have aggravated his father rather more than usual, thus robbing him of much of his wonted acumen and caution. But this is anticipating slightly. Let it first be said that all this time Pinkie Green was still alive, before a beginning is made to explain that on the all-important day that was to be Pinkie's last, in one single hour of the morning Tabitha had to be harried from her stance on the counter no fewer than ten times.

"Den dimes!" screeched the nearly frantic Isaac to Claudie. "Den dimes haf I, your poor old fadder——"

"Oh, close it!" interrupted Claudie.

"Close it! Close vot?"

"Well, I'm fed up with you always gettin' at Ol' Tabitha. She's a good ol' pal. Why can't you——"

"Close vot?"

"Now, don't you get lookin' at me like that, father."

"Claudie! *Claudee!*"

"Well, I've had about enough of it. Why can't you leave Ol' Tab alone? Why don't you stop jollyin' her off that blessed ol' counter? What do you want to do it for? She don't scratch the wood. She don't eat the glass. Of course she don't. She only wants to sit in the bit of ol' sunshine at the end. Sunshine don't cost you nothin', don't it? Course not. Oh, g'wan! Put your hand over it."

To stem the protesting torrent, Isaac had let out a squeal of rage. "I von't haf dat hell-cat, dat Egyptian——"

Jimmy Gay heard the rest of his outcry as he opened the shop door and entered. But Claudie heard Jimmy.

"Shut it, father!" he whispered harshly. "Someone in the shop."

In the workroom, where the two were quarrelling, silence fell instantly, and Isaac tiptoed away to take stock of their visitor. Only an eight-foot high wooden partition separated the back from the front premises, an ornate erection that finished flush with the inner edge of the counter and thus left a narrow passage for ingress and egress. This space was partially masked, however, by a large glass showcase, from behind which Isaac effected his purpose. Quietly he returned.

"Swell," he whispered to Claudie. "Big swell. Where's the mirror?" With the

prospect of doing business, his speech had improved.

Leering, Claudie watched him hastily smooth down his disordered hair and beard. "Goodness, father," he murmured sarcastically, "Ol' Tab wouldn't have clawed you half as bad as you done yourself."

"That cat," muttered Isaac, "what you want to go and mention her for, eh? You go and spoil things if you don't be careful, Claudie."

Claudie sniffed his scorn.

Meanwhile Jimmy was wandering along the length of the counter, inspecting the articles in the showcase that covered it, and into his expression and attitude was creeping as much of incredulity, surprise and disappointment as so obviously polite a person as he was could permit himself to display. Watching him from the cover of the other showcase, Isaac began to grin. A little joke of his was working. One window only had he, and in it he was wont to put one jewel and only one, a jewel of price, a dignified advertisement of the presence of an artist within, a compelling invitation to enter to all whom it might properly concern. But in the counter showcase was——

"Rubbish," murmured Jimmy softly. "Absolute, undiluted, little-Jew-boy tosh. Where the—what the——"

Politely repressing what might have been construed as rude remarks, he cast a protesting look around and gracefully began to withdraw.

"Aw! Mister, mister!" exclaimed Isaac reproachfully, emerging from his corner.

Jimmy turned and, seeing Isaac smiling, smiled also, such a sunny smile, the smile of a happy-go-lucky, quite simple, quite wealthy young man. So Isaac thought, and warmed to him. He scented big business.

"You see the little jade pendant in the window, eh, mister?" he said genially. "And you think it just as well to come in. Then you see *this*, and think it just as well to get out. That hits it, mister—no?"

"Yes. After the pendant, this was rather a surprise," replied Jimmy, just as genially. "You're the real Meninski, aren't you? Well, what do you mean by it?" he added, as Isaac bowed.

Chuckling, Isaac leaned forward, rested his elbows on the counter and clasped his hands together about the level of his chin, and in this attitude smiled knowingly up at Jimmy.

"You like that little jade pendant?" he said. "So? Fine, eh? Very fine, you say,

and quite right. Then don't you think one little gem like that is enough to have out of the safe at one time? *Out* of the safe, mister! In the safe I have what you want." He rose to his full height of five feet three, a fat, expectant little man. "Something good, mister—something——"

"Something good and cheap," Jimmy interrupted.

"Something good and cheap—something worth buying. That's what you mean by cheap, now, isn't it? Yes?"

"Let's see what you've got," said Jimmy, "and I'll tell you. But I'm not looking for anything in particular. Only dropped in. Not going to squander, so I warn you."

"No one squanders who buys from Isaac Meninski," said Isaac proudly, but beaming still. And off he went to bring forth his treasures, his fingers searching indiscreetly beneath his collar for the key of his safe before he was well out of sight behind the screen.

"Claudie!" he whispered, as he passed by his son.

Claudie knew the significance of that whisper: it was the signal for certain precautions which were always taken when dealing was about to be done with a customer with whom neither he nor his father was acquainted. He laid aside his work at once and went quietly to the partition, wherein was a concealed spyhole and door, through the former of which he could keep watch on all that happened in the shop, and through the latter dive in an instant to prevent the exit of anyone departing too hastily. Twice this too hasty departure had been tried; once successfully—before he returned home. The second time? Well, there were no police-court proceedings, and no report of the attempted theft ever appeared in the Press, so few of the general public got to know of the matter; but a certain man in London to-day bears peculiar marks on his face that he will carry there all his remaining years, and months and months ago the word went round the sneak-thief fraternity that now "Young Claude" was with his father, Old Ike Meninski was no longer fair game.

Through the spyhole Claudie now looked and saw the shopdoor very slightly ajar and an empty street without; within, an immaculately clad Jimmy leaning lazily but gracefully against the counter, awaiting his father's return.

"Yank," he said to himself, very greatly

impressed. "Swell Yank—very. No accent, or not what you would notice. Um! Very fit boy!"

All of which was perfectly true, Jimmy's forebears having really been passengers aboard the *Mayflower*—the descent was genuine and recorded—and only a year had passed since his father, proprietor of a bank which had been in the family for generations, turned him away, for what seemed, and no doubt was, a good and sufficient cause.

In that year, however, Jimmy had tobogganed far. But now that he has slid feloniously into No. 10, Weston Lane, no more need be said concerning this matter. As for his fitness, who should know better than Claudie? And Claudie, too, could tell the real thing in style when he saw it, for he tried to dress well himself, and was always on the lookout for something better than his own achievements and ready to profit by any good example. So he drank Jimmy in, noted the cut and quality of the coat he was wearing, the tilt and make of the bowler, the tie—its texture, tint and tying—and, last of all, the gloves. Enviously and wonderingly his gaze lingered on them as they lay on the counter by Jimmy's elbow. Of black sealskin they were, a daring pair of gloves. But just the thing for Jimmy.

"Swish," murmured Claudie. "Very."

Then Isaac brought forward the first tray of jewels, and Jimmy turned to face him, thus hiding the gloves from Claudie's gaze.

"Now, mister," began Isaac. "Now, mister! Have you ever—eh?"

He held the tray so that its contents caught the light to best advantage, and his eyes invited Jimmy's approbation.

"They look pretty good," said Jimmy.

"They *are* good, mister," said Isaac, setting the tray down and preparing to particularise.

But there was nothing on this particular tray which seemed to interest Jimmy. "All too expensive-looking," he said, promptly bottling up the incipient eloquence. "And there is nothing I fancy either, except this diamond star, and of course you'd want a fortune for it. Better turn out something else if you want a deal. And I haven't too much time."

The hint acted on Isaac like a spur; he withdrew to bring forth fresh treasures. Jimmy's personality had mesmerised him completely, and he suspected no guile. Besides, there was Claudie! . . .

The latter saw Jimmy pick the star up and look at it against the light. But that

was all he saw. His view was suddenly obscured, Jimmy having backed a pace or two and with his broad shoulders completely masked the spyhole, an unwitting movement, doubtless—perhaps?—but, on his guard immediately, Claudie stood up on a packing-case and watched over the top of the partition. And chiefly he watched the door, most of which he could see; still slightly ajar, it never moved. But also he kept an eye on Jimmy, and saw nothing in the least suspicious about him. Jimmy was paying tribute to his father's wares. In the light entering by the panel above the door, the brightest light that entered the shop, the star was being held, and a rapt gaze was being bent upon it, while reverent fingers so held it that every one of the many stones flashed its richest fire.

"Fine, mister—eh?" said Isaac, re-appearing, and letting Claudie bob back to his spyhole, the three-seconds-or-so interval of potential peril at an end.

Jimmy turned towards the counter, and when he spoke there was a thrill of genuine admiration in his tones.

"It is the work of a master, sir," he said. "I have never seen anything so fine. No, don't trouble to price it. I know it is quite beyond me. Let's see what you have there."

He closed on Isaac as he spoke, and after carefully replacing the star in its proper box on the heavily-laden tray, he bent over the new exhibits.

"That is very nice," he said, indicating one of them.

"Only eight hundred, mister," murmured Isaac.

"Dollars?" questioned Jimmy. "And cheap at the price, too," he continued before Isaac could reply. "But a bit too—"

"Pounds," interrupted Isaac. "Pounds, mister."

"Pounds! Eight hundred pounds?"

"Only eight hundred. And this is an even thousand, and this—"

"Good gracious, man! Stop it!" implored Jimmy.

Isaac gazed mildly at his customer and awoke to something of the dismay his prices had caused.

"They are not dear," he said a little plaintively.

"Aren't they? Well, I suppose they are not, considering who made the things. But, honestly, what do you take me for?"

"Well, mister"—Isaac hesitated, in his eyes the first hint of fear of coming

disappointment; but, growing hopeful again as a result of a quick survey of Jimmy's expensive attire, he continued, smiling—"I would say that a thousand would not worry a wealthy young gentleman like you."

"That's the worst of dressing beyond one's means," murmured Jimmy. "Sorry, Mr. Meninski, but your prices are altogether beyond me—absolutely and entirely."

"Aw, no, mister!"

"Absolutely and entirely," Jimmy repeated. "I'm ever so sorry. If you happen to have something about thirty or forty—might even go to fifty—no?"

"I am Meninski," Isaac said sadly.

"I see."

"Here, perhaps"—and Isaac indicated the goods in the counter showcase—"but these are things—well, I do not care to deal in them."

"Wrong shop," sighed Jimmy. "Something told me it was as I came in. So very sorry. Been a great pleasure to me to see your—creations, I assure you. Would like to buy them all. But London is rather an expensive village, you know, and getting near the end of my stay. More than sorry. Good afternoon."

Gracefully he began to retreat towards the door. Only half the distance was covered, when, loud and piercing, rose Isaac's yell of dismay.

"Claude! Oh-h-h, Claude!"

Out bobbed Claudie, and found not the slightest difficulty in reaching the door before Jimmy, for the latter had stopped short at the yell and turned, and was now staring at his father in utter amazement. Like an infuriated little terrier dog daring an enemy who has made a snap at his bone, Isaac was returning the stare, glaring, the analogy strengthened by the manner in which he was gripping the counter's outer edge with both his hands, his jewels between his outstretched arms.

"You bad villain!" he hissed.

"What the deuce is the matter?" demanded Jimmy, his calm truly admirable, so much so, in fact, that it remained unbroken even when, following the click of a spring bolt behind him, he turned to find that Claudie had locked the shop door. "This a hold-up?" he inquired of the latter, who ignored him, addressing himself to Isaac instead.

"What's he got, father? The star?"

"No-o! The *pearls*!"

"Not those matched——"

"Yes, de black t'ief! Nipped dem off de tray while I vos avay for de oders."

"You got a nice taste, mister," growled Claudie grimly. "What about it?"

"So that's the line, is it?"

The quiet sarcasm of the reply seemed to turn Isaac's glaring rage into anxiety and tears.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," he wailed, coming running along the inside of the counter and out through the flapway at the window-end on to the shop floor. "He's got 'em on him, Claude! He bound to have 'em, un—unless——"

"No one came in, father, while you were at the safe. I saw to that. Don't worry. If the pearls are missing, they are not out of the shop yet. I'm waitin' to hear from you, mister?"

"Police!" murmured Jimmy. "Fetch a policeman. As my dear old father said before we parted on the quay, 'My boy, if you ever hit trouble over there, put it up to the nearest London policeman. They're wonderful.'"

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" wailed Isaac, *sotto voce*. "Such a villain!"

"Shut it, father!" Claudie growled. "Do you hear? I'll settle him." Then, turning his clear, cold fighting gaze on Jimmy, he continued: "Police is a mighty good suggestion, but before we act on it, you can bet your last dime there are going to be certain preliminaries."

"My old father——"

"Didn't say anything about them, did he? 'Course not. He didn't tell you, when he sent you here, that there was another Meninski? He perhaps didn't know that Young Claude had come home?"

"Young Claude!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"That identical person."

"You're not Young Claude?"

"Sure, I am."

A sudden ecstasy lit up Jimmy's *blasé* young features.

"Why, man, I—recognise you," he exclaimed. "I—I saw your battle with Tiddler Thomas at the Club two years ago—two years this fall. Slickest knockout I ever saw."

"You don't want to see how it was done, do you?"

Thus brought up sharp in the midst of his enthusiasm, Jimmy showed a touch of temper. "Good gracious, man," he snapped, "I haven't taken your old boy's pearls."

"Then you won't mind us searching you, will you?"

"Not in the slightest. I——"

"Right. Just follow father, then.  
Father, lead him through."

Like an Army defaulter between his  
escort, Jimmy was escorted into the back  
premises, and there they stripped him bare.



"Police is a mighty good suggestion, but before we act on it, you can bet your last dime there are going to be certain preliminaries."

He stood it well. His boxing enthusiasm had boiled up again, and while Isaac conducted a meticulous search of his clothing, he chattered to Claudie, and got that suspicious young man quite interested, despite his suspiciousness. Boxing lore fell from his lips in a continuous stream. No secondhand stuff! He had met every artist worth meeting, and countless others; and fights and men that Claudie had longed to see were now described to him with the wealth of incident of an enthusiast and the precision of an expert.

But it was all cut short by a sudden outburst of sobbing from Isaac. "Dat cat! Dat animal! I knew," he wailed. "I told you, Claudie. Five t'ousand poun's! Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

Jimmy's clothes dropping from him on all sides, he rose and rushed to his work bench, where he seated himself, sobbing, head buried in his arms, body writhing in the agony of a sorrow far greater than that of personal bereavement.

"I—I'm awfully sorry he found nothing," murmured Jimmy sympathetically.

"I don't think," said Claude dryly, himself beginning a search of the clothes.

But he found nothing hidden in them either. Into the shop he went



"“Oh, dear, oh, dear!” wailed Isaac, *sotto voce*. “Such a villain!””

and searched there, with no better result. An empty box still filled its place on the tray, but its contents, in some mysterious way, had disappeared.

"Well, father," he inquired, returning, "what are you goin' to do?"

"Dat cat!" wailed Isaac.

"Tch!" aspirated Claudie, exasperated. "You better dress, mister."

Slowly and carefully Jimmy clad himself. "Nice pair of hand shoes, what?" said he, drawing on the black fur gloves. "Unique, my lad. Now, just ask your father to turn off the waterworks while I say my few words."

"What you got comin'?" demanded Claudie.

"Well, really, don't you think your proceedings have been—slightly irregular?"

"Got any witnesses?"

"No-o, but——"

"Then straight in front of you!" snapped Claudie. "You been lucky. Git while your luck holds. And you better not let me see you again," he added at the door. "I'll know what you are by the company you're keepin', and if you're not on the level——"

"If I'm not on the level," repeated Jimmy, as he passed over the threshold. "If you *think* I'm not on the level!" Smiling, he turned and met Claudie's gaze. "Think again! That's my tip to you. Without my twenty-eight pounds extra I'd be almost as good as you are, and I've got a little trick up my sleeve, besides, worth two of your Tiddler Thomas jaw-crackers. Do you know it?"

It was a sinister, significant pass and twist that his hand performed in the air. Its exact significance Pinkie Green was to learn within an hour. But Claudie shut the door on the performance, turned his back, and softly but wrathfully swore. That Jimmy was a crook, he now felt certain. But how he had made away with those pearls he could not conceive. And the worst of it was he had had to let him go. Just at this time his father happened to be less respectable than usual, and the police simply could not have been called in.

"I tell you what it is, father," he declared, stalking into the workroom, "if you ever again bring stuff into this shop that you've got 'on the cross,' I'm goin' to quit. No good you snivellin' there. You only got yourself to blame. If you hadn't had those queer packets on the premises, we could have nailed that swell guy easy as sayin' 'Police-man.' He might almost have known."

"It vos dat cat, Claudie. Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"Oh, dear!" echoed Claudie, foreseeing evil days. "Oh, dear."

And just at that moment Tabitha Ruth gambolled between them. Easily eluding Isaac's wild lunges at her, she retreated into the shop and there mounted the counter and mewed.

"Tabsie," called Claudie sternly, fearing for his father's sanity, "come here this minute!"

The big cat bounded towards him, leaped into his arms and caressed him, forelegs round his neck, head rubbing and rubbing against his jaw.

"Poor ol' gel!" he murmured.

"You goin' to drown her, Claudie?" inquired Isaac eagerly.

Claudie flung him a withering look, and took Tabitha Ruth up to his room. "You better lie quiet for a bit," he told her. "D'ye hear?" She jumped from his arms and clawed her way up the curtains to the top of the canopy. "Yes, you keep up there till he cools down. He's near bein' crazy just now. He'll do you in if you don't leave him alone. D'ye get me?"

Tabitha Ruth looked knowingly over the edge of the canopy.

"You wise ol' bag of sin," he murmured. "You get me all right."

Now, it is a fact worth setting down in print that from that very hour Tabitha Ruth ceased to harass Isaac. Not once did she mount to the forbidden spot of the counter, not once claw his trouser-legs or grab at his coat-tails. She left him entirely and severely alone.

Whether to ascribe the change to her respect for his wishes or to her own diabolical shrewdness, Claudie did not know. Neither seemed to him a satisfactory or sufficient cause; and he could not but keep wondering what was the real reason, for, knowing her so well as he did, he would have sworn that at times she had a preoccupied air, and that at other times she looked unusually sly.

Unlike the reader, who, in addition to knowing that something went amiss between Pinkie Green and Jimmy Gay, knows perfectly well that so much would not have been made of a cat in any story unless the animal played a more or less important part in its telling—unlike the reader, I say, never for a single instant did Claudie suspect that she had been concerned in the theft of the pearls. The mere fact of his having so scornfully rejected Isaac's general accusation

against her would have prevented him from conceiving one more rational and particular. But, besides this, he had much else on his mind oppressive enough to obscure other issues; he had entered upon the most miserable and worrying period of his days. For one thing, he was seeing his father pine away.

The loss of his jewels had left Isaac inconsolable. Two large pink perfect pearls, linked with others into an inimitable necklet, they had formed one of the greatest triumphs of his art, and no matter what was said to him in the way of cheer, he would not be persuaded but that his sun had set, and that it was time for him, a broken old man, to think about repairing to Abraham's bosom.

But another and more personal worry was afflicting Claudie. He had become convinced that his room was haunted. Very slowly had this conviction formed in his mind, and its genesis was his hearing strange noises—mysterious noises, which sounded while he slept, which woke him, which yet had ceased to sound as soon as he was awakened.

He could not locate their source, he could not diagnose their nature—they seemed no more than stirrings and quiverings, tremors rather than sounds—and at first he was inclined to suspect Tabitha. But she was always slow to answer him when he called, and then the only answer he received was a sleepy, inquiring miaou. Sometimes, too, she came down and caressed him as though both conscious that he was troubled, and anxious to soothe him, so suspicions of her could not but soon disappear. Nevertheless, the disturbance continued; he awoke at all hours of the night, and many times, and at last he was wakening in fear.

He grew thin and haggard under the strain, yet he made no complaint and never thought of quitting. A gallant little Hebrew fighting man, he kept on his feet and stood by his father, and was actually succeeding in making that sad old gentleman more reconciled to his lot, when his own trouble came to a head in a minute of concentrated horror one morning at dawn.

His impressions of what occurred were naturally somewhat mixed, and sorted themselves out in stages. First the sounds, louder than usual, wakened him, and it seemed to him that the Evil was manifesting itself in the form of a beast which was leaping about his bed. Next he recognised the beast as Tabitha. Then his hair stood on end, and the lips which were about to let loose an angry expostulation

stiffened themselves for a snarl. . . . He saw the Hand.

A black hand it was, floating in the air without visible support of any kind: no arm, no body, just a hand. Yet the uncanny apparition moved. Hovering about four feet above him, plainly visible in the grey light of morning, it seemed awaiting a favourable opportunity of darting downward to put a stranglehold on his throat.

And then he comprehended more clearly the meaning of Tabitha's antics. She had descended to his assistance, and was leaping at the menacing thing and trying to clutch it.

"Paste him, Tabsie," he yelled. "Into him, ol' thing!"

Thus encouraged, Tabitha made a wilder leap, missed by a hair's-breadth, and lighted on his face, all her claws unsheathed and in working order.

That wakened him properly. Up he got, a smarting, angry, sensible little man, and caught the hand himself, and found that it was a glove, a furry glove, suspended from the canopy edge by an almost invisible silk thread.

"You wicked ol' gel!" he exclaimed, greatly enlightened, and staring at Tabitha accusingly. "You—you been the ghost! You ol' sinner! You been playin' with this ol' glove up there, causin' all those queer noises, an'—an' lyin' low when I woke up, an' soft sawderin' me, an'—an'—"

And then—well, he recognised the glove, and a few seconds later his father, roused by a series of appalling yells, rushed into the room to find him dancing madly on top of the bed, with Tabitha Ruth doing four-foot leaps to keep him company.

"Claudie! Claudie boy!" implored Isaac, thoroughly alarmed. "I been a bad, bad fader, but I—"

His son's loud laughter stopped him. "It's not you that's driven me potty, father!" Claudie gasped. "It's—it's"—he waved the glove in Isaac's face—"it's *his*!"

"The villain's!" exclaimed Isaac, recognising Jimmy's swell handwear.

"That swell guy's—yes, father. Don't you see? Don't you get it?"

"Vot?"

"He had three of 'em. Three gloves, father. Oh, gee, what an ol' do!"

"T'ree? T'ree gloves, Claudie? Vot—vot for?"

"Two for wearin', an' one for doin' us, father. One fixed with a bit of thread that led out to a pal in the street. Oh, don't



you tumble? Ol' Tab—you mind you chased her off the counter, father? She must have been hidin' in the flapway, awaitin' a chance to get up again. An' she sees the glove go by along the floor! An' she grabs it, an' chases off with it up here! An'—oh, that guy an' his pal! What a do for them! Just you look in that ol'—"

Isaac's eager fingers were already tearing the glove open. "The pearls!" he gasped. "Claude, the pearls is here!"

"Course they are. That's how he tried

to do us. What you whisperin' for? Yell, father! Yell, can't you?"

"Oh, Claude!"

"Oh, Tabitha, you mean. She saved 'em, father."

"Oh, Tabitha," howled Isaac joyfully, seizing Tabitha Ruth and pressing her to his bosom. "Oh, Tabsie! Oh, Ruthie! Oh... Ow!"

Tabitha Ruth, being a self-respecting, unforgiving kind of cat, had bitten his nose.



"She was leaping at the menacing thing and trying to clutch it."



THE EARLY BIRD.

SQUIRREL: See that chap? He's going to take photographs for the morning papers—first crocus bud of spring.

SPARROW: He isn't! I've just eaten it.

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### THE HAPPY LIFE.

By S. Talbot Smith.

It seems to a hard-working man of letters, and keen but entirely incompetent motorist, that the profession of a repairer of cars must be the jolliest on earth. Fancy having the whole community fooling round—or longing and planning to be able to do so—with something it doesn't understand and you do, and then rushing to you with much money as a reward for doing something that to it is magic, but to you is as commonplace as shaving!

The car has been fed with petrol, and oil, and distilled water, and treated with patient kindness, and suddenly she refuses to leave her garage, or, being in full career, declines to go on. Then comes in that happy specialist. The position has no surprises for him. The cussedness of the car means the butter on his bread. He just announces that you are out of petrol (well, he says that once to every motorist, but mostly you have sense enough to see that it is never said again), or that there is a leakage in the battery, or that the back axle has short-circuited with the carburettor (or words to that effect). And whatever he says "goes." Then

he does something which puts it right, and you are grateful and probably admiring, and you pay him more or less money—generally more—and go on your way. And your place is instantly filled by somebody else begging him to name his own price for pointing out the obvious. It is a great life.

Sometimes one has visions of the same thing applying to the literary life. But it requires some imagination. You have to assume the whole community writing, or anxious to write, and then that the poem or essay or novel absolutely sticks fast and refuses to move if there is any sort of flaw in it anywhere. Then you set up your large signboard by the wayside, "Literary Repairer and Adviser," and immediately the rush sets in.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Poem won't go, madam? Allow me. . . . Oh, yes, you call it a sonnet, and it has only twelve lines. Add two more, and you will find it go quite well. Three-and-six, please."

"Essay jammed, my boy? . . . Well, I should think so. Look here: 'Battle of Waterloo, 1066.' Just a slip? Of course it

was, but you want to be careful. . . . Oh, call it a shilling."

"Well, we detected the trouble in your poem, sir. You had 'yawning' rhyming with 'morning.' Not enough to cause the stoppage? Oh, yes, I assure you. You've heard Harry Lauder do it? Ah, but that was dialect, a different make, and an expert handling it. . . . No, it's not necessary to pull the whole thing to pieces to alter it. Just slip in 'dawning' instead of 'morning,' and there will be no jarring. . . . One guinea. Oh, and three fresh commas put in. Twenty-two and six, please."

"You will have to leave this, I am afraid. Something wrong with the Greek quotation, I

. . . . Not at all. Quite a natural confusion. Bridges would be much better for a lady. Drier than Ford—not so likely to get out of your depth."

"Hallo! Yes. . . . Oh, is that you, General? 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' yes? . . . No, no. No need to wait. The author's name is *Tennyson*. . . . Very good of you to say so; one has to know all kinds of things in this business. . . . With a Y. Yes, the same as the cricketer. . . . Thanks, I'll have it put down to your account. Beautiful morning for writing, isn't it? *Good morning*."

"Hallo! Oh. . . . No, sir, I'm afraid your sermon isn't ready yet. We find it a bit slow



THE OMEN.

LANDLADY (as a fork accidentally falls on the floor): Ah, that means there's a stranger coming.  
BOARDER (tired of continual fish): Perhaps it's the butcher!

should say, and our classical expert is out at lunch. Try to let you have it before closing-time."

"Your Macartney reference was all tangled up, Doctor. Right-hand bat and left-hand bowler; used to bowl a lot and now doesn't; very awkward to handle for anyone without long experience. We've straightened it out for you. You'll find the account inside."

"Ford, madam? Oh, I don't think you would care for it. Very old-fashioned—Elizabethan model; couldn't guarantee it to go beyond Marlowe. Who recommended Ford to you? . . . Oh, you were thinking of Bridges?

in starting, and almost impossible to stop when it gets going. Marks of midnight oil all over it, too. We have several good second-hand ones you could have the use of meanwhile. You might call and look them over."

"Oh, good morning, Duchess. Hope you haven't been kept waiting? . . . We found nothing *wrong*, exactly—just the lovesongs overheated. French make, you know; they're never very reliable. I should advise you to have them taken right out. The speed limit's been relaxed a little lately, but the first censor you meet is liable to stop you."

"Now, come, what's the matter? You're

too big a girl to cry, you know. We'll soon have it right. . . . Well, of course Jack Horner must sit 'in the corner,' mustn't he? 'In the middle' doesn't sound a bit nice. You're thinking of 'The Cat and the Fiddle.' Yes, it will go all right now. Run along home."

"Deep-seated trouble yours was, sir. The 'Froude' should have been 'Freeman.' And the Beaumont and Fletcher were overlapping. It's all right now. Five guineas, please. . . . Oh, not at all. Most moderate for the work done. These minor Elizabethan dramatists are

hauling. We'll let you have an estimate of the expense."

And so the happy game goes on—eight hours a day (and overtime if one cares for it). A really agreeable set of puzzles to solve, and payment rolling in at the average rate of a shilling a minute.

Yes, and then, as you justly observe, I wake up.

But it is a great life while it lasts. I should like to dwell more on it, but I have to run the car round to the repairer now. Not much the



THE ONLY CURE.

"AND how is Mrs. Smith?"  
 "Oh, her head is troubling her a lot."  
 "That's bad. Chronic headaches, eh?"  
 "No, she wants a new hat."

delicate and expensive things to handle. You don't often see them used nowadays. . . . Thank you."

"Been waiting to see you about your novel, madam. The 'modern prototype' on page 219 was the chief trouble. But our foreman reports also that one coincidence is strained, there are several infinitives split, and some of the situations are worn quite threadbare. And really the whole of the punctuation needs over-

matter, but I can't locate it. It will be in the "Waterloo, 1066" class to him, probably. But he won't say so. And he won't call it a shilling, either. Quite otherwise.



POLICEMAN: You mustn't leave this heap of parcels on the pavement unattended, mum.

LADY SHOPPER: They're not unattended; my husband is inside the heap.

## TO MOLLY IN A NEW HAT.

The Cyclops in the days of eld,  
 (Perhaps a bit before)  
 Possessed, the ancient poets held,  
 One optic and no more.  
 He made the most of that, no doubt,  
 Ere bold Ulysses gouged it out.

But we whose sight has windows twain  
 (I do not speak of flies)  
 Are ever eager to retain  
 Our pair of useful eyes;  
 And some, indeed, so bright appear,  
 You'd think their owners held them dear.

Oh, Molly, Molly, pray beware  
 Of fashion's tyranny!  
 Without a hat upon your hair  
 You're lovelier to me  
 Grant but this boon, or I'm undone,  
 Oh, let me see the Other One

*C. Denton Smith.*



MR. FORD says he would not have been where he is but for motor-cars. The same remark applies, of course, to several unfortunate pedestrians.



## A NIGHTMARE.

HENRY (waking up with a start): Charlie, I 'ad a nightmare—dreamt I was forced to work in a pottery.

CHARLIE: Wot doin'?

HENRY: You know the bloke wot goes round tapping the crockery and listening to 'ear if any o' them's cracked? Well, I 'ad to 'elp 'im listen!

The Eastern dames, though veiled, disclose  
 Their gaze to all who pass;  
 Its power every fair maid knows,  
 Its fatal power, alas!  
 They why, sweet Molly, hide from view  
 A thing which so enhances you?

For where is that I loved to see,  
 Long-lashed and leafy-brown?  
 There's nothing visible to me  
 But drooping brim and crown.  
 The other side I needs must try,  
 To see the sparkle of your eye.

YOUNG HOUSEWIFE: I want a joint of lamb, please.

BUTCHER: Yes, madam, what part?

YOUNG HOUSEWIFE: I don't know what you call it, but it's several chops stuck together.



A new comet has been discovered which is rather worrying the astronomers, as it appears to have no tail. The only explanation they can think of is that it is either a Manx comet, or it has had its tail bobbed.

## THE PIANO.

*By J. Roland Fay.*

"You are thirty-nine," said the big man upon the doorstep to Marion, with the slightest note of query in his tone.

Marion's face flushed with indignation. I imagined so, anyway, judging by her forcible, though somewhat confused, expostulations (she is only a little over half that age). No doubt, at this point, the man contemplated the number above the street door, thereby pacifying Marion, for I then heard her say very quietly, "Yes."

"Piano," said the big man decisively, and walked heavily down the steps.

tripped out to supervise a mingled mass of heaving humanity and obdurate matter slowly progressing up the garden path.

We had arranged a little friendly gathering for that evening in our new (and first) home. I, too, had thought the hire of a piano rather an unnecessary addition to our recent heavy expenses, but—well, Marion was happy at the prospect, and it would add to the success of the evening, anyway.

"Steady there, Jim! Up a bit, your corner," came the voice of the big man. "Hold 'er, Bill, hold 'er!" (There was a bump.) "There! You should 'ave held 'er, Bill." There was a



REJECTED BUT NOT CRUSHED.

SHE: No, I'm sorry, but I'll be a sister to you.

HE: Pardon me, I have plenty of sisters; what I wanted was a mother.

Marion cried "Hi!" But he was not a man to be lightly "Hi'd!" so Marion just ran back to me.

"There's a man——" she began. Then light seemed to dawn upon her; she flung her arms about my neck. "You dear thing," she said, "how perfectly extravagant! I simply dare not have suggested it, even for this evening."

"I know nothing about it," I said quietly, but she caught a gleam in my eye and a faint smile about my mouth.

"It's a real surprise," she said, laughing, and

pause, apparently to gather fresh energy. "Now, Bill, ready! Lift, Jim—lift, don't drag, lift! Higher up your end—over towards me—to me—to ME—not too far! That'll do—she's going! Watch the corners—lift!"

Within our somewhat restricted hall a process known as "up-ending" had to be gone through, accompanied by the big man's impelling observations, Jim's heavy, though rhythmic, breathing, and Bill's spasmodic groans; Marion's continual kindly suggestions were, I'm afraid, simply ignored by the big man. In fact, he even seemed to resent Marion's instructions as to

where the piano should go. But still, it went—chiefly, it seemed, by the sheer driving power of the big man's voice.

Then Marion tripped back to me. "This is to be signed," she said, flourishing a paper before me.

"I know nothing about it," I insisted; "I'll sign nothing."

"Silly boy," she said, evidently considering that my face belied my words. "I'll sign it."

She did; she hurriedly scrawled her name somewhere upon the paper and delivered it again to the big man.

But the big man seemed quite satisfied—indeed, now that the main business was completed, his more genial nature asserted itself. He repeatedly addressed Marion as "Miss," which annoyed me; he lingered in Marion's presence

A VISITOR to a country town, talking to a local resident, was criticising the one paper the town boasted.

"Well," he concluded, "I'll say this for the editor—he can be the most sarcastic fellow that ever was when he tries."

"How so?" asked the other.

"Why, in last week's issue the department entitled 'Local Intelligence' was only about three inches in length."



"WHY give your discarded husband's suits away when you can sell them at a good price?" asks an advertisement in a Welsh paper. But shouldn't a discarded husband be allowed to take his suits with him?



A VEILED SUGGESTION.

WIFE: This steak is very stringy.

HUSBY: Try it with your veil off, dear.

a good deal longer than I thought necessary, which further annoyed me.

Having closed the front door, Marion immediately seated herself at the piano, and I, while Marion probed the resources of the instrument, drew writing materials towards me and inscribed a letter to the piano company.

"Kindly remove at earliest," I wrote, "piano left at my house in error." I further intimated that it may have been intended for No. 59, where, I had reason to believe, a piano was expected.

True, I could not help feeling doubtful as to how the big man might view the matter—in fact, I trusted entirely in his more genial nature. But meanwhile I anticipated a pleasant evening.

#### THE EARLY CUCKOO.

Oh, Cuckoo, do you, like the rest,  
No longer keep your word,  
But, making hardly any fuss,  
Arrive—an early bird?

The naturalists, a little hurt—  
Lest you may prove a hoax—  
Reply, "Maybe. Why not?" being curt  
With less scientific folks.

Nay, Cuckoo, why, in this odd way,  
Our ancient faith destroy?  
As usual, I shall think it may.  
Have been some mocking boy.

*Edith Dart.*

## THE BOOKWORM.

*By A. Warren Killingworth.*

BURTON'S books had remained stored in our boxroom for a year or more. There were I don't know how many hundred volumes, packed in several large packing-cases.

One day their owner turned up to claim them. He had been abroad, and was getting his things together again. It was his idea to reduce his library to manageable proportions. Would Mabel and I mind if he did the selecting in our boxroom?

We did, rather, but being an old friend, of whom, despite certain amiable eccentricities, we were both very fond, we dissembled our disapproval as well as we could, and acquiesced in the arrangement.

Mabel overlooked the inconvenience of having to provide a set lunch, which she would not have done had she been alone, as well as having Burton short-sightedly rummaging her kitchen cupboards for a suitable instrument to prise the cases open with.

Burton always took meticulous care in selecting the right kind of instrument for any job he had in hand. He was not one of those happy-go-lucky fellows who, in default of a tin-opener, will use a crowbar. He has too much of the slide-rule mind for that. Consequently, the finding of a suitable tool for his purpose occupied best part of the morning, and it was nearly lunch-time before he had well started.

When Mabel called him for the meal, she found him literally snowed under with books. He was hugely enjoying himself.

He informed Mabel at lunch that he had never before realised what a number of interesting works he had amassed. Some he had hardly more than glanced at. One or two he had come across actually had uncut pages. This accounted for a sudden descent upon my unfortunate wife during the afternoon—causing her to drop several stitches in a jumper she was knitting—to inquire blandly if she knew where he might find a paperknife.

Mabel met me on the doormat that evening with a troubled look. She recounted the day's doings, and informed me, in an indignant stage whisper, that our friend was occupying our boxroom to read in, using one of the half-emptied cases for a lounge, out of which his long legs ridiculously dangled. When, in order to save time, she had taken him in a cup of tea, he was still deep in some half-forgotten classic, and had bored her almost into hysterics by insisting upon reading copious extracts aloud. I calmed my wife as well as I was able, counselling patience and promising to do all I could to expedite matters.

Burton spent the evening with us and stayed the night. As we had no gas laid on in the boxroom, there was no way out of this. Mabel wouldn't hear of trusting him with a candle. In any case, it would take all the next day to finish the job properly, Burton said—blinking at us through horn spectacles as he spoke—in his

engaging way. He made us feel quite mean to think we had expected him to go on working in a stuffy little room with no light to see by.

Burton is an agreeable companion and an interesting talker, but on this occasion we did wish he was getting on with his job.

The next evening I noticed Mabel's manner was decidedly more strained. Burton was getting on her nerves. I didn't wonder at that, when I had heard her story.

Burton, it seemed, had refused lunch, contenting himself with bread and cheese. Mabel's culinary efforts, therefore, had been wasted, as well as good food spoilt, besides the fact of her having to eat a full meal she didn't want in solitary grandeur.

She had occasion to go to the boxroom for a suit-case that wanted mending, preparatory to a holiday we were taking. She discovered Burton positively wallowing in books. The trunk-maker, meanwhile, was waiting at the door. There was, however, no retrieving the suit-case from the hopeless chaos Burton had created with his confounded library. She had, therefore, to give up the idea and send the man away.

Mabel hates being switched off anything she has set her mind on. I have a strong suspicion that she had not been quite civil about it. Burton was decidedly quiet at dinner, I thought. I did my best to smooth matters over, Mabel afterwards accusing me of deliberately encouraging him. Mabel was right. I certainly had.

Our meeting on the doormat on the third evening was quite tragic. Mabel was wild-eyed and tense to breaking-point.

It appeared that during the day Burton had laid in a stock of foolscap, and was actually compiling a catalogue. I found him at my writing-table, with the unsharpened end of a pencil chewed almost to pulp, trying to decide upon his three hundred best from a list several pages long. As a result of the talk I had with him that night, he left the house with me next morning, on his way to interview a second-hand bookseller he knew, who purchased and removed books in any quantity.

He was away all day and came in late. I answered the door. It was a good job Mabel didn't. He had been mooning round the book-stalls in the Charing Cross Road. One extended arm rapturously clasped quite a number of fresh volumes.

"Couldn't resist these, old man," he explained, patting the books affectionately as he spoke. "I've wanted some of them all my life."

The expression on his face was that of a delighted child. On my ruthlessly bringing him down to earth with pertinent questioning, his face fell.

"Oh, that bookseller! Offered fourpence a volume. Couldn't think of taking that, you know. I'd rather give them away."

Dinner that night was a silent and particularly uncomfortable meal.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night, in the privacy of our bedchamber, Mabel and I held a consultation. Hoarsely



whispering together in the approved manner of arch-conspirators, we decided upon putting it across Burton by calling a bill of sale.

The man we employed to take the inventory commenced with the boxroom. Taking no notice of the bookish spectacled gentleman whom he found there, he emphatically refused to accept Mabel's assurance that the books didn't belong to us.

"He'd heard that yarn before," he said, "and was just a bit too old at the game to take it in."

Contemptuously surveying the contents of the room, he named a price for the books that worked out at something under a penny a volume.

The effect upon Burton was terrible. I wonder he didn't have an apoplectic seizure. Mabel appeared to have derived considerable satisfaction from his distressed condition. For my part, I felt some qualms of conscience when Burton, having refused all food, insisted upon remaining in the boxroom with the door bolted.

Under cover of darkness, with profuse apologies, Burton removed the whole of his threatened library in a plain van to an unknown destination. Whether or not he believed in our alleged financial difficulties, it is impossible to say. We didn't see him again for months. Last time I heard of him he was buying elastic bookcases to accommodate his ever-growing library. At the present time I believe it consists of several thousand volumes.



### MOUSE!

*By Humphrey Purcell.*

THERE are many things quite pleasant in themselves that become a burden when you don't know how to get rid of them. There is the confidential letter that you have answered during the season of no fires, the dottle of your pipe when you are smoking in the drawing-room, the worn-out safety-razor blade, the gramophone needle, the empty cigarette tin.

It requires ingenuity to dispose of even these, but there are worse things—the ancient revolver that you fear the children may discover, and which you would not trust with a cartridge anyhow; the broken bedstead that no junk dealer will even carry away; the garden refuse when it rains for three months on end; the Christmas turkey that tarried too long on its railway journey.

But in a class all by itself is the mouse you caught in the trap last night. Never yet has there been discovered a reasonable and satisfactory way of ridding oneself of its corpse.

To begin with, you have killed the thing, and in whatever course you choose you will be haunted by the realisation that you are trying to hide a crime. You—the hulking twelve stone of you—have robbed this modest one-ounce creature of its life. In your heart you are thoroughly ashamed of what you have done,

and your shame extends to the disposal of its mortal remains.

Nevertheless, dispose of it you must, and you are therefore tied down to one of the following processes, each and all of which you loathe and vow never to adopt again—

(a) You may take a spade and bury the thing. This has the merit of following precedent in regard to corpses, but the demerits of being a bother, of attracting the suspicious attention of the neighbours, and of leading to a probable disinterment if and when you dig the garden again.

(b) You may attempt cremation—a repulsive procedure from which you shrink, for reasons you find it hard to explain.

(c) You may lure a neighbour's cat to the backyard and present it with a tasty supper. This is a not inconvenient plan, provided the cat is agreeable and the neighbour doesn't know (for somehow or other another person's mouse is always suspect as an article of diet), but it is not a plan to be relied on, and the cat, having been fed with mouse, may return uninvited another day for fish or cream.

(d) You may leave the corpse in the trap, and leave the trap in some unobtrusive spot where it will be found by someone else after you have left for the office.

You may do any of these things, but never will you regard such a plan as the natural and logical sequence to the trapping of a mouse. You will still remain in doubt as to what you shall do next time. Your problem will remain unsolved.

But there is a solution, and I know of it. No longer do I dread the setting of the trap each autumn, when the chill winds drive the little rodents from the fields to my pantry, and to the cupboard under the stairs where the old newspapers go.

Shall I confide it? Would you adopt it if I did? Have you the courage? I doubt it; but for the benefit of such of you as may be willing to brave the ridicule of those who find out and don't understand, I will confess my secret.

I have bought a new mouse-trap: one of the catch-'em-alive variety. And when Mr. Mouse is found within the small cage of wood and wire, I take the contraption outside and—just lift the door!



At a celebration in honour of Shakespeare in a country town, among those in attendance was a famous football player. In the course of it, his health was proposed by an enthusiastic admirer. His response was noteworthy.

"After observing the way in which Shakespeare's memory is revered," he said, with fine simplicity, "I am not sure that I would not rather have been such a man than have gained my own greatest triumphs in the football field."



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## ENDING IN SMOKE.

*By Howard F. Clark.*

MR. PRYDE threw himself back into the corner seat as the train drew out of the station. With a sigh of satisfaction he placed his feet on the seat opposite and prepared to enjoy in comfort the ninety miles journey North.

A piece of luck getting a compartment to himself, he thought, as he felt for his cigarette case. He found the case, opened it, and discovered it to be empty. In the hurry of departure he had forgotten to buy his smokes! To an ardent smoker like Mr. Pryde, this was indeed a tragedy. Sixty miles to the first stopping-place, and no cigarettes!

An exclamation of annoyance escaped him, then he picked up his paper. A prominent advertisement on the front page, lauding his particular brand of smokes, did nothing towards soothing him.

By the time the train pulled up, some two hours later, a cigarette had become a vital necessity to the well-being of Mr. Pryde, who alighted on to the rather small platform in the hope of finding a buffet. He could see none at first, then espied one on the opposite platform. Was there time to run down the platform, cross the bridge, make the purchase and return before the train left?

As if in answer to his unspoken question there came a shout—

"Hurry up, there! We're ten minutes late!" And Mr. Pryde saw the guard anxiously eyeing his watch as he called to the porters busily trundling milk churns into his van.

The thought of another two hours, perhaps, without a smoke, and a puff of fragrant smoke wafted to his nostrils from the cigar of a passing traveller, goaded him into action.

He was preparing for a mad rush, when his eye caught sight of an automatic machine which bore the magic words "Chocolates, Matches, Cigarettes."

Frantically delving into his pockets, he produced some coppers, thrust a penny into the slot, and pulled out the drawer.

"Hurry up, sir—we're off!" warned the guard's voice.

Mr. Pryde clutched the packet which lay in the drawer and rushed back to his carriage.

The whistle blew, and the train puffed out of the station.

Mr. Pryde puffed, too, when he looked at his prize and read on the packet "Bake's Chocolate." In an excess of rage he was about to hurl the

thing through the open window, but, remembering the nephew he would be meeting at his journey's end, thrust it into his pocket instead.

It was a thoroughly miserable man who jumped out of the train when, after what seemed to him an eternity, it finally reached its destination.

Jack, the nephew, waiting to meet his uncle, was greeted with a gruff "Half a minute!" as Mr. Pryde dashed into the buffet, to reappear with a smile on his face and a cigarette between his lips.

During the walk from the station he remembered the chocolate. "Here you are,



AN INSPIRATION.

MISTRESS (to new servant): Mary, stick a knife in the cake, and if it comes out clean, the cake is done.

MARY: If it comes out clean, m'm, I'd better stick all the knives in it.

Jack," he said jovially. "Keep your strength up!"

The boy eagerly opened the package. Then his face fell. "Thanks, uncle," he said regretfully, "but I don't smoke!"

Mr. Pryde snatched the packet from the lad's hand, and saw three cigarettes snugly nestling in the box.

"Well, I'm dashed!" he ejaculated.

Then he noticed for the first time that the enterprising confectioner was using the outside of the box as an advertising medium, for printed in small letters before "Bake's Chocolate" was the word "Try."

# THE RECORDS

of success given in this new series of School of Accountancy advertisements are not the most remarkable of the hundreds available, but the most typical. They are the stories of men of ordinary intelligence and education, told with the object of giving example and encouragement to all ambitious men who may read them. Apart from the names, which for obvious reasons are fictitious, every fact is certified true and correct by David Paterson, Chartered Accountant, 135, Wellington Street, Glasgow.

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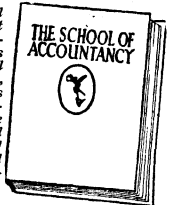
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THE BOGEY CUPBOARD.

There's a big black cupboard where Mary Ann  
Used to tell us the Bogey Man  
Lived alone in the dark and cold,  
And if we weren't just as good as gold  
He'd pounce out on us, so we were told.

Before the gas or the lamp was lit,  
Close to the nurs'ry fire we'd sit,  
And, while the kettle to boil began,  
Shiver and shake while Mary Ann  
Told us tales of the Bogey Man.

But when one day we courage took  
To open the cupboard door and look,  
There was nothing at all to make you quail,  
But only a broom and a rusty pail  
And the shiny track of a slimy snail.

A STATION-MASTER has succeeded in growing  
chrysanthemums of two different colours from  
one root. This is thought to be a sign that  
Nature is trying to adapt itself to the railway  
amalgamations.



A CLERGYMAN famous for his preaching  
says that if his sermon ever stretches beyond  
the twenty minutes to which he intends to  
limit it, the words of his little daughter ring in  
his ears, and he reflects that some of his  
congregation doubtless share her feelings.

The occasion was the little girl's sixth  
birthday, which chanced to come on harvest  
festival day.

She went to church with her mother and sat  
quietly through the service. The sermon was



FAMILY HISTORY.

PLEASANT OLD GENTLEMAN: And have you any brothers or sisters?  
SELF-POSSESSED INFANT: No—I'm all the children we've got!

We lit a candle—the light was dim—  
And poked about, but no sign of him  
Could there be seen, and as Mary Ann  
Has left us, too, d'you think she can  
Have run away with the Bogey Man?

*Ada Leonora Harris.*



INDIAN tradesmen have a very picturesque  
way of commending their wares to the public.  
This is an extract from a costumier's price-list:  
"Organdy muslin dress. A very finest and  
prettiest dress that wear well in this hot season  
by our enormous ladies of noble mind."

unusually good, the preacher himself could not  
help thinking: he had plenty to say, and he  
said it fluently.

"How did you like my sermon?" he asked  
his young critic, as they walked home together,  
her small hand in his big one.

"You preached awful long, father," said the  
little girl, "but I stood it because I love you,  
and I knew I'd have a nice dinner when I got  
home, and forget what I'd been through."



A MOTOR-CAR with a collapsible body has  
been invented. Hitherto the pedestrian has  
done all the collapsing.



## Relieve your sore throat

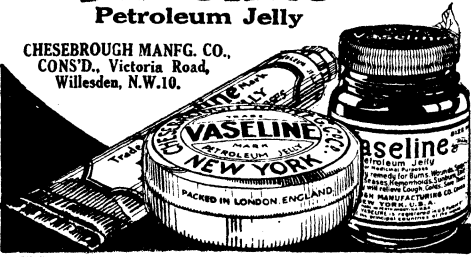
by taking frequently internally half a teaspoonful of "Vaseline" Jelly.

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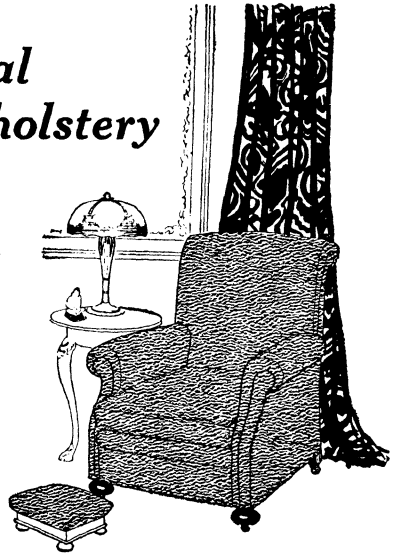
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**"Rexine" Leathercloth**  
is the ideal material for  
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niture. It looks just  
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better and costs con-  
siderably less.

Your Furnishing House can show  
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varied grains and colourings.  
When buying see that "Rexine"  
Leathercloth is specified on the  
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# "Rexine"

LEATHERCLOTH

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London: 42, Newgate Street, E.C.1.

Q 3B.

A MODERN MARTHA.

Now, Chloe has a mundane mind,  
 She's practical and energetic;  
 While I'm of quite another kind:  
 Contemplative—in fact, poetic.  
 And every time my fancies soar,  
 She drags them back to earth once more.

I like to saunter in the shade  
 And listen to the thrushes singing;  
 But "She who needs must be obeyed"  
 Dispels my peace in accents ringing:  
 "A good brisk walk is what you need.  
 You're growing stout—you are, indeed!"

A MUSICAL expert thinks that solo singing by young girls is a severe strain on the nervous system. It even affects the audience like that sometimes.



DORCAS, aged nine, on her way home from school, was met by her mother, who asked disapprovingly: "Why were you walking with all those boys instead of those nice little girls just behind you?"

"I was not walking with those boys," Dorcas replied, after due deliberation. "They were walking with me!"



THE PRESCRIPTION.

"Ow's your old man this mornin'?"  
 "Oh, 'e's very poorly, and it's such an expensive disease 'e's got. The doctor says I must keep 'im in good spirits."

When sunset bathes the world in light,  
 And tips the clouds with rosy fingers,  
 I gaze in rapture on the sight.  
 But Chloe also looks and lingers.  
 Says she: "To-morrow will be fine;  
 'Twill dry the washing on the line!"

I wrote a sonnet to the Spring  
 And read it at the breakfast-table;  
 It really was a charming thing.  
 So judge my feelings, if you're able,  
 When Chloe said, "Oh, by the way,  
 Spring-cleaning will begin to-day!"

B. Noël Sazelby.



"Is Club Life Dangerous?" asks a contemporary. Not very, we should say, judging from the large number of club bores who still remain unskilled.

*Facing Third Cover.]*

HAROLD and Jack, brothers, were in their nursery for recreation after supper. Harold struck Jack with a stick. An argument followed, and in the midst of it the nurse came in with the news that it was time for them to go to bed. Jack was put to bed first. The nurse said:

"You must forgive your brother before you go to bed. You might die during the night."

After some reflection Jack replied:

"Well, I'll forgive him to-night, but if I don't die, he'd better look out in the morning."



"Why is Bings, the poet, looking so worried to-day?"

"Well, he sent his latest poem to a newspaper, and the editor thought it was a double acrostic and printed it in the puzzle column."



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# WINDSOR

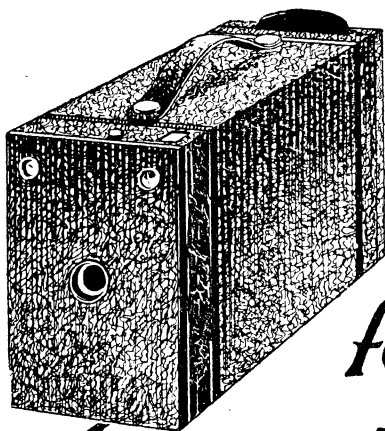
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WINDSOR CO. LIMITED LONDON

THE CIVIL SERVICE





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## WRIGHT'S COAL TAR SOAP

Save 40 outside wrappers from these famous tablets and send them, together with a certificate from parent or guardian to the effect that the child is under 16 years of age, to (Camera Dept. 5) WRIGHT, LAYMAN & UMNEY, Ltd., Southwark, London, S.E.1.

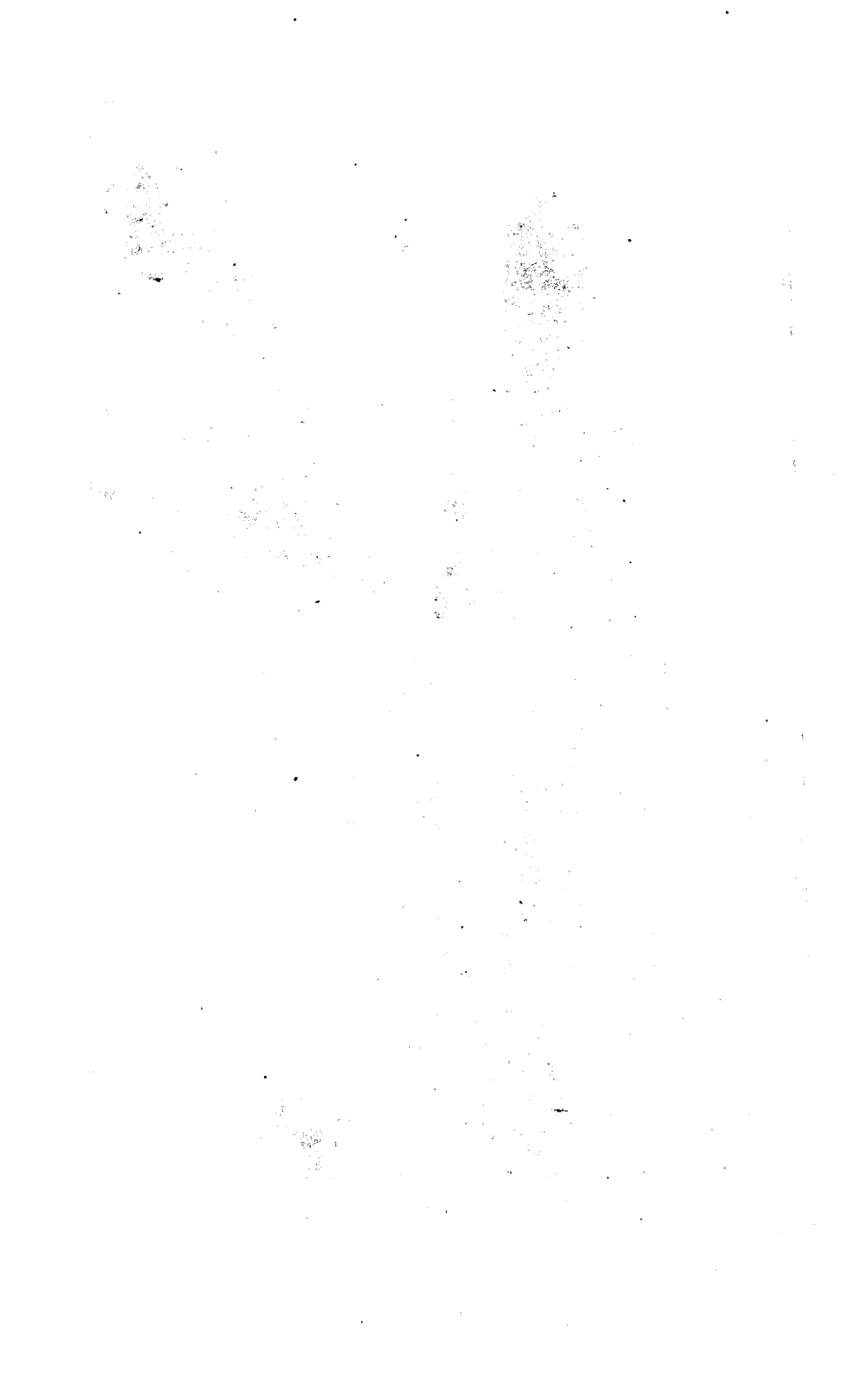
Hawk-Eye Owners are eligible for the monthly competition run by the Kodak Magazine. For further particulars see the Kodak Magazine, copies of which can be had from any Kodak dealer.

NAME.....

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*I hereby certify that the above is under 16 years of age.*

.....  
*Signature of Parent or Guardian.*





THE STEPPING STONES. A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY WILL F. TAYLOR.



"Ah, but it is good to see you all once more!" She spoke warmly, effusively, touched to the heart by their kindly greeting of her."

# LOVE THAT IS KIND

By KATHLYN RHODES

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT BAILEY

MIDDLE. HEDWIG LAURENT sat in her shabby bed-sitting-room in a tall house in a dreary London street, a small box open on the table before her, her eyes fixed on the stained and ugly paper which covered the wall opposite to her.

Anyone observing her at the moment would have seen only a rather faded, middle-aged little foreigner, neatly but shabbily dressed, staring before her with eyes which surely ached at sight of the dreadful wall-paper; and a kindly observer would have said that doubtless her inward meditations were as drab, as forlorn, as her outward surroundings at the moment.

But the kindly observer would have been mistaken; for Hedwig Laurent, for all her fixed stare at the dirty mustard-yellow wall, was a thousand miles and more away from her unattractive lodging in a London side-street.

Before her tired eyes rose the vision of another land, a land of great mountains, of glittering snow-peaks, of blue lakes, of little wooden villages perched on sunny hill-slopes. She saw green pastures, peaceful valleys, heard the tinkle of bells as the cows grazed in the lush meadows, the music of glacier-fed torrents rushing down the mountain-sides. In spirit she walked not on hard London pavements amid the roar and traffic of the busy world of men, but on white roads among the vineyards, between stone walls on which the little brown lizards basked in the sun, or slipped noiselessly into the crevices between the stones at the first hint of danger.

She smelt the fragrance of the grapes, saw the brown-faced *vignerons* picking the rich clusters from the tall vines, felt the sun lie warmly on her stooping shoulders, the breeze caress her tired forehead; and in her dream her shoulders straightened them-

selves, the lines were smoothed from her brow, and she was a girl again, a happy child straying hither and thither on the sunny white roads, in the great green pastures where the music of the cow-bells set the pace for her tripping feet.

Ah! With a sigh she came back to the drab reality, knew herself and her surroundings for what they were—a middle-aged, faded, tired woman in a dingy London lodging. The thunder of motor-buses, the whistle of passing trains along the embankment beneath her window replaced the silver song of the cow-bells, the reek of petrol the fragrance of the grapes, the hot, dust-laden air filtering through her dim window the snow-breeze off her beloved mountains.

Yet not altogether did the vision fade. For—and at the very thought her heart beat more strongly in her breast—here, beneath her hand, lay the golden key to that land of enchantment, the key which should unlock the gates to the wonder country of mountain and lake, of pine forest and lush meadow, of snow and sunshine, torrent and glacier.

At last, after nearly twenty years—seventeen, to be exact—the nostalgia which had never ceased to afflict her since her first brave departure from her native land was about to be appeased.

For in the small square box on the table before her—a poor symbol for the Pandora's casket she knew it to be—lay the money which through all these seventeen years had been so slowly, so laboriously amassed, the money—nearly two hundred pounds—which represented to her the return to her home in the mountains, to the old mother who awaited the coming of her beloved daughter with the little competence which should assure her at least a serene old age, secure from the terrors of the poverty which is dreaded by age even more than by vigorous youth.

It was not much, a hundred and ninety-five pounds; but in the Swiss village living cost so little, and this sum, added to the mother's tiny income, supplemented, perhaps, by lessons in English given to neighbouring children, would maintain the little household in comfort, even in modest luxury, for years to come.

And, oh, the joy of returning to the chalet in the village nestling beneath the mountains! The joy of awakening in the clear bright air of dawn, of seeing the mountain-tops grow rosy in the sunrise, of hearing

the songs of the *vignerons* trudging down the white roads to their daily toil, the incessant chirp of the grasshoppers as they jumped and flew in the tall grass bordering the wayside. . . .

A knock at the rickety door brought Hedwig Laurent back to a sense of her surroundings, and with instinctive caution she thrust the box, Pandora's coffer, beneath a heap of newspapers ere she answered the questioning sound.

"Come in, please." Her English was good, as well it might be after her seventeen years' residence in the country.

In answer to her invitation the door opened quickly, and a little woman appeared in the aperture, a sharp-featured, kindly-eyed little woman dressed with almost Parisian neatness in a well-worn black coat and skirt and small black hat. She entered briskly, calling cheerful greetings as she came, and Hedwig's tired face brightened at the sight of her friend.

"Ah, Marie, but it is good to see you again!" The conversation was in French throughout. "I had almost feared I must leave London without another glimpse of your face, and that would have grieved me to the heart."

"What, then, you verily leave us so soon?" Mademoiselle Marie Dubonnet sat down with another of her quick, bird-like movements, her bright eyes roving affectionately over her friend's face.

"Yes. Within a week I shall be gone."

"To Switzerland?"

"Not at once. See, this morning I received a letter from my dear friend and former employer, Madame Temple, and I could not forego the pleasure of accepting her so kind invitation."

Rummaging in the heap of letters beside her, she extracted one, which she handed to her friend, and the other took it eagerly, reading it with little satisfied noddings of the head.

"MY DEAR MADEMOISELLE HEDWIG"  
(so ran the letter)—

"I have received your letter telling me of your impending departure for Switzerland. Although we all rejoice sincerely in your happiness, we cannot bear that you should leave England without paying one more little visit to the house which was your home—may I say your happy home?—for five years. All the children, including poor Bertie, will be at home next week. May we therefore hope to see you on

Tuesday or Wednesday for a week at least ? Let me know by return, and we will meet you as usual.

"Yours affectionately,  
"HILDA TEMPLE."

Mademoiselle Dubonnet laid down the letter with a final nod. "So ! She has the good heart, this Madame Temple. You go, Hedwig ?"

"Yes. For a few days I must go. And then I return to my beloved Switzerland, never, with God's help, to leave it again."

"You have the money ?"

"Yes. I drew it from the bank yesterday—one hundred and ninety-five pounds." She spoke with gentle pride, and drew forward the little box once more. "Oh, it is not much to show for seventeen years ! But at first, during the first two or three years, I was not lucky. My posts were hard, ill-paid, and I could not save money. It was all I could do to keep myself, and I could not lay by any of my pitiful earnings. The first luck I had was when I went to Madame Temple as governess to her little ones. True, the salary was not large, but I was happy there, and at the end of five years I had a hundred pounds."

"That was good." Marie Dubonnet had heard the story before, but she guessed that it was a relief to her friend to tell it again, and she listened with an air of eagerness which was in itself an inducement to further revelation.

"I thought how delightfully easy it was to save money. As you know, I had always determined not to return home until I had a little nest-egg, something to draw upon in my dear mother's declining years. Two hundred pounds was the sum I had fixed upon ; I knew how far that might be made to go in our frugal home life. And now I begun to see glorious visions. I was worth more money now, I could command a larger salary—I might save even four hundred pounds with luck ; and for the present my mother was comfortably provided for ; the little income went twice as far for her now that I was not there to feed and clothe."

She paused, and the other prompted her gently. "You had other posts ?"

"Yes, but none so good. Now and then I had to draw on my savings. The long holidays, when I could obtain no posts, were a tax on my money, and the War, the terrible War, when it came, bore heavily upon us poor foreigners, with the increased cost of living, and the suspicion with which

any who bore a foreign name were looked upon in those days. But it was my illness—you remember—the operation, the long convalescence, which made a hole in my poor little store." She sighed, then smiled bravely. "But *le bon Dieu* did not forsake me. After I grew well I obtained a good post, through my dear Temple family, and now—*voilà !* The key—the golden—no, the paper key to Paradise !"

With a dramatic flourish she unlocked the little box and disclosed the neatly folded bundles of Treasury notes therein.

"Indeed I rejoice in your happiness, dear Hedwig !" Marie Dubonnet spoke with sympathetic gladness. "I can see you at home—you and the dear mother—in your little chalet, with the big pine trees rising behind your dwelling, the music of the waterfall ever in your ears, the snow-capped mountains opposite your windows, the chirp of the grasshoppers in your garden without. And there you will live, happy, beloved, respected by all who come into contact with you, *chérie*."

Ten minutes later the visitor took her leave, and Hedwig, a scrap of song upon her lips, locked up the precious box and set about preparing the simple supper which she had not prevailed upon her friend to share.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the day appointed for her visit to Greengates, the house wherein she had spent five happy, peaceful years, the valued friend and governess of the household, Mademoiselle Laurent stepped into the hall with a beaming smile which was reflected on the countenances of the family assembled to meet the visitor.

"Ah, but it is good to see you all once more !" She spoke warmly, effusively, touched to the heart by their kindly greeting of her. "*Chère Madame*, you are well—*bien !* And Margot—why, how thou art grown ! And Lucie—no longer *la petite !* Truly thou, too, art a *demoiselle à marier !*" She turned from one to the other with little bird-like cries of affection. "Ah, *ce cher Monsieur !* I trust I see you in good health ? Yes, for me, I am quite strong, quite well again."

She looked round her as though in search of someone, and Mrs. Temple, her kind face a little troubled, hastened to reply to the unspoken question.

"You are looking for Bertie, Mademoiselle ? He—he is out at present. Oh, no, he is not away—indeed, he is in what he

calls a job in the town, but you know he was never a great hand at work."

"He was always an incorrigible shirker!" Mr. Temple spoke sternly, and the little Swiss woman glanced at him rather apprehensively. "You know that, Mademoiselle Hedwig. He was idle as a boy, and as a young man he is no better."

For an uncomfortable moment a silence descended upon the little group, but a second ago so cheery and full of good-will; and Hedwig was truly relieved when the old housekeeper, secure in her position in the family, came hurrying up to add her voice to the chorus of welcome.

Later, when she had established her guest in a chintz-covered chair in the pleasant room so long looked upon as her own, Mrs. Temple added a word of explanation as to her husband's attitude towards his only son.

"You know, dear Mademoiselle, Bertie has always been so high-spirited, so easily led away. As a schoolboy he was always in scrapes, drawn into them by the boys with whom he was friendly. At college he seemed to gravitate naturally towards the most extravagant set, and my husband paid his debts over and over again, until he could really do no more. And now the boy is in Mackett's office in the town. His father said he would spend no more on him—he must begin to earn for himself. And I'm afraid they are very undesirable companions for him there, fast young men who go in for horse-racing, billiards, for anything idle and expensive. Again and again Bertie has lost sums of money. I have paid his debts without telling his father, but now I have been obliged to tell him I can do no more."

She paused, then resumed in a lower tone: "It is not that the dear boy is naturally vicious, you know. He is only weak, deplorably weak. Where others go, he must follow. His father talks of sending him to one of the Colonies, and sometimes I believe it would be the best for him. And yet"—she sighed, and her hands trembled in her lap—"I can't bear to think of him going away—our first-born, our handsome, gay boy, the boy round whom all our hopes were centred for so long. Yet sometimes I fear what he will become if he is not checked in time."

"Ah, dear Madame, he is young yet—young and thoughtless!" Hedwig spoke reassuringly. "He will settle down one day. I know Bertie—there is, as you say,

no harm in him. He is weak, but his heart is good. He will turn out a fine man yet, I am sure. He will never do a wicked, a dishonourable thing; you will never have cause to blush for him."

"Well, I hope you are right." Insensibly the mother took comfort from the words. "For I think it would kill me if ever I knew my boy to do any shameful action."

She pressed a small handkerchief to her eyes, then, rising, resumed in a more cheerful tone: "Well, we won't talk so seriously any longer. Come, tell me how you like the new chintz? And what do you think of the girls' latest photograph? They put it here as a little present for you—something to remember them by when you are far away among your beloved mountains and pine forests."

And in the ensuing discussion the subject of Bertie and his delinquencies dropped.

Not until quite late that night did Hedwig behold her former pupil. She was, indeed, in her room, about to prepare for bed, when there came an imperative summons on the panel of the door which could come from none but the son of the house. In answer to her call he entered the room breezily, a fair, handsome, blue-eyed boy, with a weak mouth and indecisive chin.

"Hallo, Mam'zelle, here you are, then!" He swooped down upon her and enveloped her in a rough bear's hug. "Why d'you go to bed so early? You might have guessed I should want to see you."

"Ah, naughty boy, why were you not in to dinner?" She accepted his caress and its subsequent dishevelment without protest. "Your father was displeased, your mother saddened by your absence."

"Oh, rubbish!" There was a note of recklessness, almost of hardness, in his voice which was new to her. "Don't you begin to lecture, Mam'zelle! A fellow can't be in leading-strings all his life."

For a second there was a touch of tension in the air. Then Bertie made an effort and recaptured the heartiness with which his entry had been accompanied.

"So this is a farewell visit, is it? You're off back to your old mountains, are you? D'you remember how you used to gas to us kids about the snow and the avalanches and things?" He spoke laughingly now. "Your eyes used to shine and your voice get higher and higher with excitement, and you used to finish up: 'One day, when I have made my little fortune, I shall go home!'"

He sat on the edge of the table and regarded her gaily. "I s'pose you've made your fortune, as you're going back. I say, I wish you'd give me the recipe. A fortune would come in mighty handy to me just now."

"I have no recipe, Bertie." She spoke gravely. "Only hard work, and again, work. This money"—she laid her hand on the box which she had placed on the table just before his entrance, preparatory to placing therein the Treasury note which Mr. Temple had insisted on giving her towards the expenses of her journey from Town—"represents years of toil, of self-denial, of frugality. A governess's profession, especially when she is no longer young, offers no great rewards, you must remember,



"For a moment there was silence. She did not look at the boy's face; but had she done so she would have read therein an extraordinary mingling of emotions."

and it has taken me a long time to make the sum which to a rich man would look pitifully small."

"How much is it, Mam'zelle?" The frankness of the question saved it from impertinence.

"One hundred and ninety-five pounds," she answered quietly, "and to me it represents much. But to you—oh, Bertie, you are young, strong, well-educated, gifted.

What are you going to do with your talents? You have it in your power to make much of your life, to win not only money, but honour, respect, esteem. Don't throw it all away, Bertie, don't waste your youth, your gifts, your health—"

"Here, I say, Mam'zelle, chuck it!" For once he spoke sullenly, and his blue eyes looked dark, stormy. "The mater's been at you, I suppose. You don't under-



stand, you women, that a fellow like me can't hang about at home like the girls. One must go out, meet one's friends, pay one's footing—"

"But surely one need not waste money? Oh, Bertie"—her manner was earnest for all its gentleness—"when you come to my age you will see how very, very wrong it is to waste the precious money which was meant to bring good, not evil, to its possessors. Where should I be now if I had been careless, wasteful? I have at last the means of regaining my beautiful Switzerland, my happy, simple life with my dear mother. But had I been careless, wasteful, extravagant, I should not have been, as I am at this moment, rejoicing in the means of escape from lonely toil."

"You needn't preach to me, Mam'zelle." His manner was still resentful. "I don't waste money, because I've not got it to waste. Why, if I put a bob on a horse you'd think I'd blued a hundred pounds! Though, Heaven knows, I wish I'd cut out horse-racing long ago!"

For a moment his brow grew black, his young voice strained and bitter, and Hedwig's sensitive soul took alarm at his manner.

"Bertie"—her voice was low, kind, a little diffident—"you are not seriously in want of money? If—if you owe a trifling debt, anything which is troubling you, let me give you a pound or two out of my little store. I cannot offer you much, because I must think of my mother as well as myself. But you are very welcome to two or three pounds."

For a moment there was a silence. She did not look at the boy's face, but had she done so she would have read therein an extraordinary mingling of emotions—surprise, a half-shamed gratitude, cupidity, resentment, and, finally, a reckless decision.

"It's awfully decent of you, Mam'zelle." His voice was husky. "But, honestly, I don't want your money. Or, to put it more plainly, a few pounds would be of no use to me. Oh"—she had begun to speak—"don't say any more, there's a good soul!"

He paused, then resumed with a fairly good imitation of his usual gay voice and manner: "Now I'm off to bed, and you'd better go, too, Madam Midas! Good night, and sweet dreams of your precious snow-mountains!"

Stooping down, he gave her another careless hug, and a moment later he left the room, banging the door noisily after

him, indifferent to any possible sleepers at hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

The week passed swiftly, but, to Hedwig Laurent, less happily than she had anticipated. Although the family made much of her, were undoubtedly glad to have her there, there seemed to be a cloud hanging over the household, a cloud which had the power to dim, ever so slightly, the sunshine which was the general atmosphere of Greengates.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Temple looked worried, troubled, the former giving way to fits of irritability unusual to him, and more than once his manner to his son verged on harshness. Even the girls were affected by the cloud, though in them it took the form of wondering what on earth Bertie had been up to now. And as for Bertie himself, his appearances, even at meal-times, were spasmodic, irregular, his manner was hurried, uneasy, almost at times furtive.

When on the last morning the family assembled in the hall to bid their guest farewell, Bertie was absent from the group. In vain did his sisters call his name, in vain did they seek him in his most likely haunts. The hand of the clock sped on inexorably towards the last moment in which it was safe to linger, and at last, regretfully enough, Hedwig was obliged to relinquish all hope of bidding good-bye to the boy she had known and loved since her entry into the household long ago.

She was surprised, a little hurt, by his absence; but, after all, Bertie was notoriously unpunctual, and doubtless he would come dashing up five minutes after she had driven away towards the station.

Which was, strangely enough, just what happened—strangely, because the son of the house had been close at hand all the time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back in London, little Mademoiselle Laurent spent several happy, busy days, bidding good-bye to her few faithful friends, settling her small accounts, making one or two final purchases.

Her respective box reposed, locked, at the bottom of her locked trunk, and not until the afternoon on which she intended to change the money into Swiss francs, and purchase her ticket at Messrs. Thomas Cook and Sons' office, did she draw it from its resting-place to set about this last most pleasant task.

As she bent over the trunk, she was

humming a gay little song, a delicate pink flush in her soft cheeks, her eyes gently bright with anticipation. But when, after a moment's search, she raised herself up, the hand which held the box was shaking perceptibly, the pink flush had faded, and a dreadful apprehension replaced the glow in her eyes.

Surely the box was woefully, suspiciously light. Yet the seal was unbroken, and no one could have tampered with it without access to her keys, and such access was impossible to any outsider, for she carried the keys with her always by day, slept with them under her pillow by night. She was certain that she had never relaxed her precautions in the slightest degree, excepting on that one day when she had thoughtlessly left her keys on her dressing-table for an hour while she ran down to the village to bid good-bye to the old postmistress. She had hurried back, remembering suddenly her carelessness, and had breathed a sigh of relief at finding the keys where she had left them. Slipping them into her handbag, she had resolved to be more careful in future; but, after all, the incident had caused her no real anxiety.

For at Greengates one need fear no theft. All the household were her friends, all the servants old and trusted dependents. No one there would stoop to rob her; they knew her—she almost ventured to believe they loved her—too well. And no one was short of money at Greengates—except the son and heir, Bertie. . . .

"Oh, no, Bertie would never do it! He is wild, extravagant, but not a thief!" Now the crimson flag of shame flaunted in her cheek, shame that she could thus have maligned, even in thought, the son of her beloved friends. Rather would she think all the world dishonest than he, a child of the house which had been to her a happy home for five good years.

With parted lips and trembling hands she unlocked the box, and found it, as she had expected to find it, empty.

No, she was wrong. There were still two thin pieces of paper therein—two five-pound notes, all that was left of her little store.

Perhaps disappointment is never so overwhelming as when it comes in what should have been the moment of realisation. One may relinquish a distant pleasure with much less pain than one gives up a project close at hand; and when, after years of hope, of dreams, triumph is almost within one's grasp, to find that one's hand closes over

empty air, that, to put it more poetically, the crock is full of withered leaves instead of the fairy gold one has visioned there, is to suffer a disillusionment which may break the stoutest heart.

Slowly, slowly realisation poured over Hedwig's soul, flooding every chink, every corner of her being until she felt her very life submerged beneath the torrent. Not for her the joyous return to the snowy mountain peaks, to the green, music-filled valleys, the Alpine villages of her childhood. Slowly, inexorably the sunlit vision receded, leaving in its place the drab walls of a dingy London lodging; and as she realised the truth, understood that the joy for which she had waited for what seemed half a lifetime had vanished into thin air, even Hedwig's brave heart fainted within her, and she sank on her knees by her little bed in a very agony of homesickness, of disappointment, of misery.

Somehow, in spite of her brave words of denial, she did not doubt what had happened. She knew, as certainly as though she had seen it take place before her eyes, that the person who had robbed her was Bertie Temple. He had stolen her money, but he had not been able to meet her eyes, to bid her good-bye, to give her the boyish kiss which up to now had always marked their farewells.

And somehow the fact that he had not found it in his power to give her that Judas kiss of betrayal brought the first ray of comfort to her almost breaking heart. In spite of everything, he was not wholly bad, and yet was it not the last word in infamy thus to betray an old friend?

As she knelt, her thin shoulders heaving with dry sobs, there was a sound as of a letter being pushed beneath her door, and mechanically she rose and went to pick it up from the carpet, where it lay gleaming whitely against the drab background.

She knew the handwriting at a glance, and for a moment a surge of anger swept the meagre frame from head to foot. So, then, he was brazen, after all! Either this letter was a bold justification of his action, or an hypocritical gesture of farewell; and as she tore it open, her lips were firmly set in a sternness unusual to those gentle lines.

"DEAR MAM'ZELLE" (the writing was hurried, untidy)—

"I have just heard you're leaving almost at once. You've found out by now, of course, that you've been robbed, but I don't

suppose you guess it was I who took your money. You know I'd not have done it, but I was at my wits' end. It started in the office, when, like a fool, I ran into debt. They persuaded me—the fellows—to go to a money-lender, and of course he knew it was safe enough, with my father a rich man. In the end I owed the brute nearly two hundred pounds—with his enormous interest—and he threatened to prosecute unless I paid up. I knew Dad would half kill me if it got out, and I'd half made up my mind to kill myself when you came to the house, and I knew you had the money I wanted. Of course, if you tell my father, he will repay the money, but it will mean hell for me, and it would be better for me to go out and drown myself, if only I had the pluck. You can't forgive me, of course, and you'll never understand the temptations we fellows have. I only hope it won't mean you've got to stick here till I can pay you back. I will one day as sure as I'm alive, but it will take time. I meant once to come and tell you myself, but I know now I daren't face you. Every minute I expect to see you coming to interview Dad, and if you do I shall clear out and make an end of it all in Sharp's Pool. It's no use saying I'm sorry—you wouldn't believe me if I did. But if you're going to give me away, for God's sake do it quickly.

BERTIE.

P.S.—I left ten pounds, so that if you decide to go to Switzerland you can pay your fare."

When she had read the letter to the end, Hedwig sat down very slowly at her table and gazed at the opposite wall with eyes which saw nothing temporal.

She could not doubt Bertie's story—it bore truth in every line, though she did not believe he would ever find the courage to end his life. And the mixture of callousness and remorse, the odd impulse which, while robbing her of the savings of years, could yet seek cause for gratitude by leaving her a paltry ten pounds to pay her fare to Switzerland, made this document remarkable reading indeed.

It was not, then, too late for justice to be done. She had only to seek out Mr. Temple, with his son's confession in her hand, for her loss to be made good, for her golden key to be restored to her—more, her golden future rendered safe and stable once more. She knew Mr. Temple's character, just, upright, generous; knew that she would receive

fair and honourable dealing at his hands; and she told herself that it was her duty to herself to go to him, to accept from him the means of happiness of which she had been robbed by his son.

Her duty to herself, yes. But wasn't there another duty laid on the human race—one's duty to one's neighbour? And didn't that rank higher in the scale of Christ-like virtues than duty to one's self?

Yet surely it were too much to ask that she should suffer this outrage in silence? By all the rules of equity, of fair play, of justice, she was justified in speaking, in demanding that a portion, at least, of her rightful possessions be returned to her. And if in the process a young soul was scarified, terrified, tormented, did not the thief deserve punishment, disgrace?

Yet all her life she had striven, in her modest, unassuming way, to follow the precepts of the Son of God, He Who had taught men to love their enemies rather than to hate them, Who bade them give their cloaks to those who had already stolen their coats, He Whose Gospel was charity, Whose other name was love—that charity which suffered long, yet was kind.

"Oh, no, oh, no!" Suddenly she was afraid, afraid of the depths—or was it heights—which opened up before her shrinking soul. "I can't—I can't be kind! I have been wronged—surely I may exact payment for that wrong! I can't be expected to give up everything, the dream of a lifetime, to lose my all and say nothing!"

And ever in her head one sentence rang like a chime of little golden bells, to which she tried in vain to stop her ears: "Love suffereth long and is kind—is kind—is kind!"

With a little cry she fell on her knees once more, and the waters of affliction flowed over her gentle, suffering soul. And in this, the darkest hour of all her inoffensive life, the voice of the Christ she had striven humbly to follow sounded ever sweetly, persuasively through the darkness; and now she tried no longer to avoid hearing.

"Love is kind—*My* love is kind. Let yours, O my disciple, be kind also. I suffered many things, even the indignity of death, at the hands of men, yet *My* love faltered never. See to it that thy love is of as enduring a quality."

And slowly, slowly the light brightened within her soul until she realised at length that the choice was hers no longer; that as Christ had forgiven His enemies, so she

must forgive the poor sinful boy who had at a blow destroyed the delicate fabric of her happiness.

And with the knowledge came, strangely, a wonderful, an all-embracing peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the following afternoon Mademoiselle Hedwig Laurent walked slowly away from Cook's office at Ludgate Circus, carrying in her bag the little bundle of Swiss notes for which her last ten English pounds had been exchanged. She intended sending them home to her mother in Switzerland, with a cheerful note bidding the recipient command her soul in patience yet a little longer, and wait for the letter which should explain why for the moment it was not quite feasible for Hedwig to carry out the long-cherished plan of return. Truth to tell, Hedwig did not as yet know what form that explanation should—indeed, could—take; but in the new and almost unearthly freedom from care which had, ever since her awakening that morning, possessed and almost transfigured her soul, she was content to wait for some sign from the Power which she felt, vaguely yet certainly, to be watching over her, guiding her every action.

She had not thought it would prove so easy to forgive Bertie Temple his act of treachery. At first she had felt that she could never bring herself to do so, that even though she kept silence, did not in her turn betray him, she could never forego a very deep, very bitter resentment against him, inasmuch as it was owing to him that her golden dream was shattered. Yet somehow, when once she had conquered her most natural grief, she had found it quite easy to extend to him the charity which, though it suffered much, was kind. Instead of hatred, she felt only pity for the poor misguided boy, and she had determined to write him that very night and assure him of her complete forgiveness.

As she walked along this golden afternoon of early September, she was surprised to realise how peaceful, how even happy she felt. The sunshine was so warm; she had never before noticed how clear and transparent the atmosphere could be, even in a London street, on a beautiful autumn day such as this. She had expected, when she went to Cook's office, to feel depressed, gloomy, remembering the difference between her present errand and the one which she had hoped to perform. Yet instead of depression she felt a totally unexpected lightness of heart. It was as though some-

thing pleasant were about to happen to her. She found herself thrilling oddly with a queer little sense of anticipation, as she had been wont to thrill when one of her kind friends prepared some simple treat for her, and she was sufficiently aware of the fact to endeavour to put it into words.

"Really, I don't know what can be happening to me to-day!" She walked on with her quick, light steps, her eyes roaming interestedly over the crowded street, the tall buildings beneath the bright blue sky. "I expected to be miserable, and instead I'm feeling happier than I have done for years! It must be this beautiful air"—she inhaled it joyously—"or the sunlight, or—I don't know what it can be; but I feel as though something very nice were waiting for me round the corner—as though I were coming in for a fortune or something of the kind. Really, it's very odd. I've not felt so—so young and—and gay for years!"

It was exactly at this moment that she caught sight of a young man standing on an island in the middle of the street, a young man who strongly resembled Bertie Temple.

Surely it was he—those broad shoulders, that fair head could be none but his—and if so, it seemed to her imperative that she should catch him up, should speak to him, assure him of the forgiveness he was perhaps longing, yet fearing, to seek at her hands.

Without stopping to consider the consequences of her action, she stepped off the pavement and set out to cross the street towards the island whereon he stood. Later, the chauffeur of the car which knocked her down declared in court that he couldn't believe she didn't see him, her eyes were fixed on him and she was smiling-like, as much as to say that she was quite aware he was coming on, and would take precautions accordingly.

Only she hadn't taken precautions, and the inference was that, in spite of the chauffeur's belief, she had not really seen him or his car at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Late that night, when, after a succession of bewildering dreams, Hedwig opened her eyes once more, she was surprised to find herself lying on a narrow white bed in what seemed at first to be a very small and cell-like chamber. Subsequent investigation proved that the chamber was oddly lofty for its size, also that its walls appeared to be strangely shaped and unsubstantial-looking. Even as she gazed, one of those queer walls moved, or was moved, bodily aside; and

then she made the astonishing discovery that it was not a wall, but a screen, one of two or three placed round her bed, making a small space in which, beside herself and the bed, there reposed a chair on which sat a young woman wearing a grey dress covered by a white apron, a white cap on her smoothly-coiffed head.

She did not understand it in the least, nor could she account for the fact that it seemed almost impossible to keep her eyelids lifted sufficiently long to take in all the details of the scene. She felt queerly light and—bodiless—such was the strange word which occurred to her—and nothing seemed to matter very much so long as she might lie still and let herself drift into the sleep which hovered close at hand. So she closed her eyes again and lay very still.

"Is that you, Hopkins?" A very low, quiet voice murmured the words, and the young woman sitting on the chair answered in the same soft whisper:

"Yes. That you back again, Rose?"

"Yes, worse luck!" The speaker, a pretty, fair-haired girl, had entered noiselessly, and now she stood regarding the bed with a compassionate expression on her face. "Is that the little lady who was brought in to-day?"

"Yes. I'm afraid it's all up with her. She's barely moved since five o'clock, and Sister thinks she will just sleep herself quietly away."

"Hard lines! That driver ought to be hanged."

"They say it wasn't his fault—that she sort of walked straight into him with a smile. Anyhow"—Nurse Hopkins was a practical woman—"hanging him wouldn't save her. Tell me, Rose, have you enjoyed your holidays? Been abroad, haven't you?"

"Yes, to Switzerland."

"Switzerland, eh?" Neither of the girls noticed the tiny, almost imperceptible flicker which passed over the white face on the pillow. "Beautiful country, isn't it? I always meant to go for a Polytechnic tour—a week in lovely Lucerne, don't you know?"

"Oh, beautiful isn't the word!" Nurse Rose spoke enthusiastically, though still in a whisper. "The snow-mountains and the lakes and the great pine trees and waterfalls—oh, and the blue skies with the white peaks standing out against 'em—Hoppy, it's just perfect! I don't believe Heaven can be any lovelier!"

"Oh, come, Heaven's going to be a place

of golden streets and gates of pearl!" Nurse Hopkins spoke rather reprovingly, but the other girl clung to her point.

"I don't believe it. I believe Heaven'll be just like the loveliest place on earth, and if that's not Switzerland, I don't know what it is! Take my word for it, Heaven will be just like that—snowy mountain-tops and green valleys and blue lakes. . . ."

Suddenly both nurses turned and stared towards the bed, from which had issued a far-away, thin voice which yet held an oddly urgent note.

"Nurse!" At the sound Nurse Hopkins was by her side, but the ghostly voice, regardless of hospital etiquette, summoned the younger girl with a gasping word.

"Yes, I'm here. What can I do for you?" Nurse Rose knelt down by the bed impulsively and put her warm young hand on the cold, motionless one lying helpless on the bedclothes.

"You said—Heaven would be like—Switzerland. . . ." So faint, so ghostly the murmur that even the girl's quick ears could hardly catch the meaning.

But she answered instantly: "Yes, I'm sure it will. If you know Switzerland, you know how lovely it is, and Heaven can't be any lovelier."

"I know it—yes." The ghost of a smile trembled over the pale lips. "And—if I go to Heaven—now—perhaps I'll see my Switzerland again—after all. . . ."

The weak voice died away, though the flickering smile still lingered on the patient lips, and a second later Nurse Rose turned, with an awe-struck whisper, to her companion:

"Hoppy, she's going—if she's not gone. Fetch Sister—quick—she ought to be here."

And as the older woman obeyed unquestioningly, Nurse Rose laid her warm lips for an instant on the cold forehead beneath her and murmured gently, conscious all the while of unprofessional behaviour:

"I'm quite sure you'll go to Heaven, dear, and if you want it to be like Switzerland—why, it will be—for you!"

When, an instant later, the hurrying Sister stood by the narrow bed, Hedwig Laurent was no longer there, but a smile still lingered on the pallid lips, a look of peace irradiated the tired face.

For perhaps Hedwig's half-sensed anticipation of the afternoon had been realised, and happiness unlike any she had ever known or dreamed of had awaited her on the road of Life, round the corner which is Death.

# THE MASHIE THE MASHIE-NIBLICK AND THE NIBLICK

By BERT SEYMOUR

*Winner of "The News of the World" Tournament, 1921, the Croydon and District Professional Alliance Cup, 1920, and the Essex Championship Cup, 1922*

*(In a chat with Clyde Foster)*

*Illustrated from action-photographs of Bert Seymour by Percy G. Luck, and diagrams*

IT is often said that holes are won around the greens. To a very large extent this is true. The man who can play his mashie with deadly accuracy is a dangerous opponent.

## THE MASHIE.

No club is more serviceable when once the player gets into touch with it. It cannot be forced to do its work. The mashie will have its own way, and you will be well advised to bow to its requirements. The greatest distance at which this club should be played is about 120 yards. When it is used at a longer distance, it is being asked to do more than its duty.

Take a careful look at the head of the mashie. This will convey some idea of its capabilities. The head is very much set back, and there is never any need to scoop the ball with it. In fact, that is a fatal error into which many golfers fall. When the head of the mashie comes in contact with the ball at its own natural angle, the shot will be played, as all mashie shots should be played, rather high in the air.

## STANCE FOR THE MASHIE.

The stance for the mashie shot should be very close. With the feet pointing outwards, the distance from heel to heel should not exceed a foot and a half.

There is no pivoting in the mashie shot. Both feet must be kept flat on the ground, while the knees maintain a slack condition that gives play to the shot.

## THE HANDS.

There should be no turning of the hands either in taking the mashie back or bringing it forward. A good way of determining whether the hands are being turned or not is to look at their position after the shot is made. In the case of a correct mashie shot it will be found that the back of the left hand faces the pin. Unless this is so, the shot may be played with too much run or deflected to right or left.

## THE "RUN-UP" SHOT.

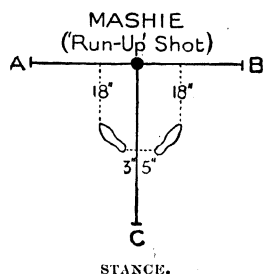
This shot requires careful judgment as regards both distance and the risks of the ball being turned aside by any protuberance in the ground before it reaches the green. No "side" should be given to the shot. The ball must run straight forward from the point at which it reaches the ground. To accomplish this the hands should be close to the body for both the backward and the forward swing.

This delicate little shot might be compared to swinging the club from the rim of a saucer down to the middle of the saucer (where the imaginary ball is lying) and across to the rim of the saucer directly opposite.

The club should be held almost at the bottom of the grip for this shot, as by gripping further up there is danger of coming in contact with the ground behind the ball and foonzing the shot. The wrists should be kept fairly taut.

As the club-head passes under the ball the

greatest care must be taken not to shovel the shot. The set-back face of the mashie and the sprightliness of the rubber-cord ball will, between them, perform the shot without any attempt on the player's part to lift the ball, so to speak.

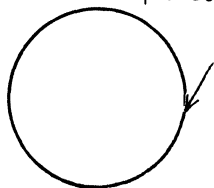


This clever little shot would be much more frequently made if the nature of the mashie's head were kept in mind. The shot is really played by gliding the mashie back from the ball and forward again without lifting it off the ground—playing it like a putter. What happens is that the ball springs up the face of the mashie and re-bounds sufficiently into the air to hop over the ball in the way.

#### THE "PITCHING" SHOT.

Playing the mashie from, say, 120 or 80 yards tests one's judgment. The club should be picked up with the right hand to about the level of the player's head, which remains absolutely still, with the eye fixed on the back of the ball. The club-head should then be driven under the ball with the object of banging it high in the air to drop on the green and stop there, the nearer the pin the better.

Mashie 'Run-up' Shot.



WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL.

The shape of the mashie naturally imparts underspin to the ball, if only the club is left to do its own work.

You cannot keep the head too long down in playing these mashie shots. The ball should almost have

reached the green before you raise your eyes to see it. Accustom yourself to playing the mashie in this manner and you will soon be able to "feel" where the ball has gone. When the head is lifted, the tendency is to hit the ball too near the top, with the

result that it does not rise, but trundles along the ground, most likely into one or other of the bunkers that guard or flank the green. An examination of the mashie should almost suffice to show what it is intended to do and how it should be played.

Do not push with it, but always pitch in such a way that the ball will rise nicely into the air, and begin to drag as soon as it falls. If the club is brought well into the "root" of the ball, this drag will be sure to follow. It is then quite safe to pitch well up to the hole.

Unless the mashie is used, as some strong men use it, at much greater distances than 120 yards (quite wrongly), there must be no pivoting at all with this club. It is sufficient that the knees should bend to permit of the swing being smoothly performed.

#### THE "CUT" SHOT.

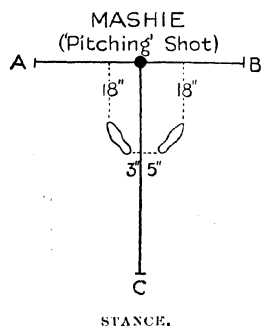
Playing the mashie for a cut shot only requires a clear idea of how the club should be manipulated.

To loft the ball over a high object near at hand, the club-head should be thrown well out from the body and brought sharply across the ball, and then turned away outwards again so that a straight line could be drawn from the head of the club at the end of the backward swing and the head of the club at the end of the forward swing.

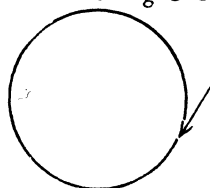
The right knee should be bent low as the ball is struck, and for this particular shot a square stance cannot be used. The left foot must be pulled back well

out of the way and the toe of the right foot should be brought close to the ball with the left heel opposite the ball.

Possibly this shot is played better still with the mashie-niblick, a club which takes up the game at that juncture where the



Mashie 'Pitching' Shot.



WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL.

mashie seems to be over-taxed in lofting. This is the genius of the game of golf—each club dovetails into the other.

#### FAULTS IN MASHIE PLAY.

I wonder how many golfers all over the world to-day are bemoaning the fact that the mashie is letting them down. They throw

of being properly played. No doubt you know already where the error lies.

#### LIFTING THE HEELS.

It may be that you are lifting your heels, a thing that must not be done in playing the mashie, especially at distances of from 40 to 80 yards. Keep the heels down and bend the knees slightly. You will at once perceive an improvement.

#### LIFTING THE HEAD.

Lifting the heels is not so common as lifting the head. You know this quite well. Every player and every caddie has attributed a bad shot to this cause, but with remarkable persistency you keep on forgetting, despite the fact that now and then good shots result from avoiding this error and keeping the head stock-still till the time comes for moving forward to the green where the ball already lies awaiting to be put in the hole, if, indeed, it has not disappeared in the tin, as sometimes happens, and would happen three times as often if the head were always kept down.

#### CKETING.

Socketing with the mashie is an evil from which golfers might well pray to be delivered. I have known "patients" to be afflicted with this malady for weeks on end. They have come to me in desperation, threatening to give golf up before it drives them crazy. I have heard a professional being

victimised by socketing longer periods than you would think possible.

Now, socketing is not an incurable trouble. I have had short attacks of it, and the means I took to shorten these attacks I shall now explain. You have seen a fieldsman chucking in the ball sharply across his hip-joint to the wicket-keeper. Play your mashie in



THE MASHIE APPROACH.

*Illustrating the correct way of playing the short mashie approach. The hands are well down the shaft of the club.*

strokes away around every green, "duffing" and "socketing" with the mashie just at that period when this club is trusted to fulfil the promise of the shots that went before it.

Don't blame the mashie as being too light, too heavy, or otherwise defective. You cannot be playing it properly, for, like all the other clubs in the bag, the mashie is jealous



that fashion and you will not socket. It is a certain and immediate cure. There is no occasion to argue the point any further. Just chuck the mashie-head as the fielder chucks the ball—at a short “mashie” distance from the wicket—and you will have taken a glad farewell of socketing.

#### POINTS IN GOOD MASHIE PLAY.

1. Do not use the mashie for a greater distance than 120 yards.

2. Do not scoop the ball with the mashie, but let the club-head pick the ball up as you swing it smoothly through.

3. Stand with the feet comfortably close and lift the club up a little way beyond the right shoulder with the right hand.

4. Do not pivot with the mashie. It is enough to bend the left knee in taking the club back, and the right knee in bringing the club forward.

5. In playing a short run-up shot with the mashie, hit it fair with the centre of the club and follow-through till the club-head points at the flag.

6. In playing short mashie shots hold the club low down near the bottom of the grip. This minimises the danger of scuffling across the ground behind the ball.

7. Keep the hands close to the body in going back and coming forward.

8. In trying to negotiate a “stymie” by jumping over an opponent’s ball, draw the mashie gently along the surface of the green as if it were a putter.

9. Mashie shots played at distances from 80 to 120 yards should be boldly “banged” into the air.

10. The ball should have almost dropped before you raise your head to see where it has gone.

11. Playing the mashie for an ordinary cut shot, the hands should not turn either in

going back or in coming forward, and at the finish of the shot the back of the left hand should face the flag.

12. Playing a cut shot over any high intervening object or steep bunker, a high wall or a tree, the club should be swung well out to the right away from the body, and then drawn sharply across the ball. In

this case the ball rises almost perpendicularly. Keep the left foot well back in playing the shot.

13. According to the position in which the ball lies, the cut shot may be played in this way either by the mashie, the mashie-niblick, or the niblick.

#### THE MASHIE-NIBLICK.

The mashie-niblick has a heavier head and still more set-back face than the mashie. Its function is to pick the ball out of difficult lies and at the same time get, where desired, a certain amount of distance.

It is wrong to use the mashie-niblick when the ball lies clear enough for a mashie. Many players make this mistake. They try to play the mashie-niblick as the mashie should be played. The majority of their shots go wrong.

If I were asked to name the iron club with which I would most reluctantly part, it would be the mashie-niblick. This, being a sturdier club than the mashie, is more capable of picking the ball up from long grass or any sort of very bad lie.

As with the mashie, there must be no pivoting with the mashie-niblick. The distance asked for of this club may be anything between 30 and 80 yards. Some players may use it for greater distances, but it is best not to ask too much of any club.

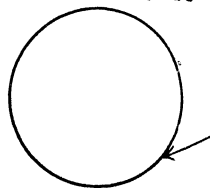
#### THE STANCE FOR THE MASHIE-NIBLICK.

The feet should be firmly planted hardly more than a foot apart, and while the knees bend as the club is being swung, they should not bend very much. The mashie-niblick shot must be played in a firm, smashing manner, and care must be taken to throw the club-head clean under the ball. Don’t “quit” the shot, but play it boldly.

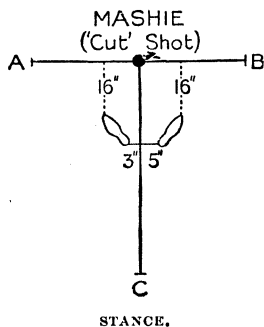
#### THE GRIP FOR THE MASHIE-NIBLICK.

I grip the club well down the shaft and direct the shot firmly with the right hand, but not stiffly. In both mashie and mashie-niblick shots I bring the hands down the club according to the distance to the green. The little chip shots with either of these clubs should certainly be played with the hands well down the shaft. If you have not

Mashie ‘Cut’ Shot



WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL.



STANCE.

straight down again with a firm, explosive punch.

#### HITTING BEHIND THE BALL.

The ball itself must not be directly hit with the mashie-niblick in a bunker, grass hazard, or at any time when this club is used. The ground or the sand should be taken behind the ball. The weight and shape of the club-head carries it under the ball and so picks it up. There is another reason—I might almost call it an economic reason—for not hitting the ball directly with the niblick, because, if you do, deep gashes or ugly scratches will illustrate the mistake you have made.

When the mashie-niblick is played with your head well down, it will be found that there is practically no run of the ball wherever it alights, even on the smooth green, and preferably there. The shot must never be played slackly. The ball cannot be swept away with a mere flick. It must be hit and banged away—either that, or the sand behind it in a bunker must be made to rise and



TOP OF SWING IN FULL MASHIE SHOT.

*The left heel is barely off the ground, although the knee is bent.*

experimented with this, the usefulness of it will become apparent on trial.

If you lift your head, all is over. The shot simply cannot be played if the player looks up while he is playing it.

#### OUT OF THE ROUGH.

When the mashie-niblick is used to get the ball out of long grass, it should be lifted almost perpendicularly and brought down in such a way as to minimise the resistance of the grass. The club must not be taken back and brought forward along a plane, because that would involve gathering the grass together between the club-head and the ball. Everything depends on lifting the club perpendicularly and bringing it

blow it away, so to speak.

The mashie-niblick is the club to use in such situations as when a ball has run over the green into longish grass behind or has otherwise found trouble. This shot has to be played very carefully, as there are two dangers—getting out too clean and running over the green into similar trouble on the opposite side, or playing the shots so feebly that the ball still remains in the grass.

In the act of hitting the ball with the mashie-niblick, the head should be leaning over the right shoulder as the hands are thrown sharply forward. It is much easier to under-do than to over-do the mashie-niblick shot.

## APPROACHING WITH THE MASHIE-NIBLICK.

Owing to the excessive amount of under-spin given to the ball by this very deeply set-back club, it is always best to pitch boldly for the pin, trusting that the under-spin will take effect and the ball move forward only a few feet. To play too short with the mashie-niblick generally means leaving oneself a long approach putt.

The term "approach" in golf refers to distances that bring the green within reach of any of the iron clubs. The term "short approach" denotes shots played from the neighbourhood of the green. When an "approach putt" is spoken of, the reference is to a first putt of considerable length.

The gradations of iron clubs relate to the setting-back of the head. An iron is more set-back than a cleek; a mashie is more set-back than an iron; a mashie-niblick is more set-back than a mashie; and a niblick is the most set-back of all.

I suppose the mashie-niblick is the most effective weapon in all my armoury. Observing this, players have asked me whether I had abandoned the mashie altogether. In the summer weather, when the greens are fast and fiery, I suppose I give the mashie much less to do than at other times.

Naturally the mashie-niblick, being heavier and more set-back than the mashie, is really intended to be played from rough or heavy lies. But I use it even on the smoothest fairways when I want to pitch to the pin with the maximum of underspin.

It was the mashie-niblick that enabled me to win *The News of the World* Competition, and it was the mashie-niblick, ably assisted by the putter, that gave me my entry into the semi-final at Gleneagles, when I beat that great juggler Joe Kirkwood of Australia.

I recall one shot at Gleneagles with this club that called forth from Kirkwood the exclamation: "Gee, boy, but that was a peach!" My ball lay practically unplayable among tall yellow broom. I studied the position for at least a minute, which is a long time to think over a shot. The green might be sixty or seventy yards away. Then I decided to play the shot left-handed. I had no left-handed club, but it was hopeless to take up the usual stance. Turning my

mashie-niblick erect on the toe, I swung freely and the ball rose high out of the broom and dropped on the green. But for that shot, I should not have beaten Joe Kirkwood.

I am aware that the shot was rather freakish, but it was no fluke, and no other club in the bag would have enabled me to make it but the mashie-niblick. Had it been possible to play the ball in the usual way, the mashie-niblick would have been my club, but the shot could not have been better played with the right hand than with the left as on this occasion.

## FAULTS IN USING THE MASHIE-NIBLICK.

The mashie-niblick must be gripped firmly with both hands so as to preserve control of its deep, heavy head. A gentleman came to me once for a lesson exclusively devoted to the mashie-niblick. He threw a few balls on to the steep, rough rising bank to the left of the green, and proceeded to play the shots in every case badly. "There you are," he said. "What is the matter with me? That is how I bungle the mashie-niblick every time I take it in my hand."

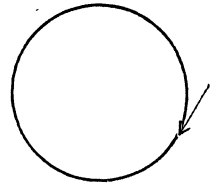
## LIFTING THE HEAD.

I detected two faults immediately. He was looking up to see the shot instead of keeping his head down to make it.

## A SLACK GRIP.

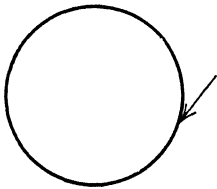
He was also gripping the club too slackly instead of chipping the ball firmly. I showed him how it was possible to lay the ball in every case

Niblick in Thick Grass.



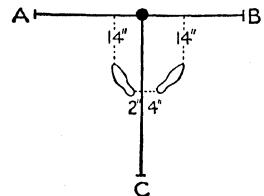
WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL.

Mashie Niblick.



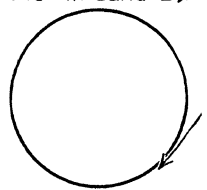
WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL.

NIBLICK.



STANCE.

Niblick in Sand Bunker.



WHERE TO STRIKE THE BALL.

comparatively near the hole, and of course I showed him how it was done. In a few minutes his lost confidence in the mashie-niblick was restored. "That will take strokes off my game," he said as we parted. There is absolutely nothing else to bear in mind, in connection with the mashie-

the club and ladle it on to the green. Again, the club will do its work if you will let it.

#### PLAYING TOO SHORT.

Perhaps the greatest danger in the mashie-niblick shot lies in playing too short, as there should be practically no run off this club, owing to the cut that is naturally given to the ball. It is best to pitch practically up to the pin.

So long as this shot is executed in the proper way, the ball will buzz on the green in its determination not to run forward. No shot is more deserving of practice. It is sure to be called for several times in every round, and its value, when well played, can be easily seen.

#### THE NIBLICK.

The stodgiest and weightiest club of all is the niblick, which plays a part in the game that can be played by no other. It may be used in preference to the mashie-niblick in particularly thick grass, among weeds, or thistles, or gorse, or in any other predicaments where its big, capable set-back head enables the golfer to cut his way through to the ball.

But the niblick owes its existence mainly to the deep sand bunkers where the mashie and the mashie-niblick would be overtaxed in playing the shot. One should reckon, except in very rare circumstances, upon getting out of a bunker with the niblick in one shot. But beware of trying to get too far out, as in attempting this there

is great risk of not getting out at all.

"Get out and be thankful" is a good guiding principle.

The niblick is the giant of the bag of clubs. It is set back almost to flatness. In addition to being thick and heavy, it may measure anything from two to three inches



EXPLOSIVE SHOT WITH NIBLICK.

*Although the player knows he has got the ball well out, the head is kept rigidly down.*

niblick, than this keeping of the head down and gripping of the club firmly as the ball is hit.

#### "SHOVELLING" THE SHOT.

I may add that there should be no shovelling of the shot, as if the idea were to get the ball on to the middle of the face of

in diameter. The largest sizes are jocularly spoken of as frying-pans. When the ball lies so badly that the shot cannot be played by the niblick, it is indeed in an unplayable place, as, for example, completely sunk in a rabbit scrape or buried among gorse.

Players endowed with exceptional shoulder power, like Edward Ray, may be able to play a shot among gorse and get the ball out by sheer strength coupled with timing. The majority of golfers, however, would pick up the ball and play another shot as near as possible to the spot where the previous shot was played, incurring the appointed penalty.

#### USES OF THE NIBLICK.

The niblick is mostly used for playing out of bunkers when neither the mashie nor the mashie-niblick could be trusted to meet the case.

If a ball lies embedded in a sand bunker and the player takes his niblick, he is faced with a shot that requires care. The ball should not be hit by the niblick, but the club should be driven into the sand two or three inches behind it so deeply that the ball is exploded out.

#### STANCE FOR THE NIBLICK.

In playing out of a deep bunker both feet should be pressed firmly in the sand, as the shot requires all the power you can give it. Incidentally here it may be mentioned that the etiquette of sportsmanship enjoins upon the golfer the duty of smoothing over footprints or holes in the sand before he leaves the bunker.

It is very bad form to tramp deep footprints or cut great holes in the bunker and come away without levelling them up. Players behind might find their ball in the same bunker, and it is only fair to them that you should leave the sand as nearly as possible as you found it.

#### A STEADY HEAD.

To lift the head in performing these niblick shots is absolutely fatal. The player must not concern himself with watching where the ball goes. He must be content to dislodge the ball from the bunker. If it lands on the green and stops there, all the better. But it must not be left in the bunker, if it is at all possible to "hoik" it out. Every golfer should carry a niblick, as the need for it almost invariably arises at one hole or another during a round.

#### FIRMNESS OF LIMB.

In playing this club firmness in every limb is the great requisite. Anything resembling slackness is sure to play havoc with the shot. The sharp edge of the club might very easily delve into the ground before the ball is reached, and for that reason the niblick must be played so as to get the ball up just as the ground is struck.

The proper time to use the niblick is when no other club can be expected to make the shot.

The niblick should be lifted straight up past the right ear and driven into the sand without any idea of following through except in the sense of sending the club-head under the ball.

#### BUNKER PLAY.

The nature of the sand in a bunker must be taken into account in playing a niblick shot. So must the nature of the lie. If the bunker is a deep one with a steep face to loft over, then the explosive shot is the best.

This is accomplished by aiming two or three inches behind the ball and driving the club-head into the sand under the ball without actually hitting the ball. (As a matter of fact, the ball will have fallen on evil days when the edge of the niblick strikes it.)

It may happen even in a bunker that the ball lies fair enough to be played with a mashie. In that case the player must use his own discretion. I have myself on many occasions used an iron, and even a baffle, out of the bunker, but a very shallow bunker, called a "pot-bunker."

#### POINTS IN USING THE MASHIE-NIBLICK AND NIBLICK.

1. In no circumstances pivot when using the mashie-niblick, but let the knees bend slightly. Every shot with this club must be played firmly.

2. When using the mashie-niblick or the still more set-back niblick to play out of long grass, the club should be lifted almost straight up and brought straight down again to prevent the grass from getting too much in the way. The head should be leaning over the right shoulder in playing mashie-niblick or niblick shots, and the wrists should come forcibly into the stroke.

3. Do not be afraid to pitch up to the pin with the mashie-niblick or niblick, as, if the head has been kept well down, the ball should rise a considerable height and drop almost "dead," like a poached egg, to use a familiar expression.

4. In taking the heavy niblick to play a shot out of a deep bunker, the feet should be as firm as possible and the club-head driven into the sand two or three inches behind the ball, which will be "exploded" out.

5. For all mashie, mashie-niblick, or niblick shots, no matter how the ball is lying, both feet must be kept flat on the ground, and the head down with the eye fixed on the ball, or the place where the ball was, till the results of the shot are evident.

6. Never ask any of these clubs to perform more than its allotted task in the game.

[Golfers who have followed this article and those by the same player which have preceded it in the WINDSOR's pages will be interested to know that they are being republished by Messrs. Ward, Lock and Co. in extended form, together with much

other instructive matter, in a new volume by Bert Seymour, entitled "All About Golf." In this particularly practical book the well-known golfer, who is also one of the most successful of instructors, seems in very fact to take his readers out on the links with him, leading them step by step from the rudiments of the game right up to the higher technicalities and perfection of style and finish which go to the making of a first-class golfer.

The work has been thoroughly and efficiently illustrated with action-photographs, for which Bert Seymour himself has posed, showing both *correct* and *incorrect* positions, so that the reader may see exactly how each shot should be produced, and also what faults to avoid. There are also many diagrams specially drawn to illustrate various technical points.—ED.]



## THE PILGRIM WAY.

**H**OW dreary was the purple sky  
And desolate the day,  
When first with sad, reluctant sigh  
I trod the pilgrim way!

Not of free will I walked therein.  
Sadly elect and lone  
I left my country and my kin  
To front the great unknown.

Once with the festive multitude  
I kept my holy-day,  
And now in solitary mood  
I walked the pilgrim way.

Through valleys dim with withered fern,  
And ghostly with the wind,  
With jostling fears at every turn,  
Before me and behind.

Ah, surely never pilgrim heart  
Went such a weary mile,  
Nor traversed paths so far apart  
From human word and smile.

Then, stooping very low, to see  
The stones and miry clay,  
The simple truth gleamed clear to me  
Upon the pilgrim way.

For countless marks of pilgrim feet  
Were plainly printed there—  
A company both real and sweet  
Had met me unaware.

Proud to be on the pilgrim way  
That pilgrim saints have gone,  
Through cold and heat, by night and day,  
Now, O my soul, march on!

FAY INCHFAWN,

Author of "Through the Windows of a Little House," etc

# TEA FOR THREE

By K. R. G. BROWNE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

MISS VIRGINIA BLAIR, perched upon the edge of the little oak table and swinging a small foot in a childish but graceful manner, surveyed the two young men before her with an expression of faint exasperation upon her charming countenance.

"I do wish," she said, "that you two would stop heckling me! Running a tea-shop is just as dignified and ladylike as hammering a typewriter and much more interesting. Can't I earn my living in my own way?"

Mr. Thomas Rodway opened his mouth to speak, changed his mind, and closed it again. Mr. Vernon Fleming stared thoughtfully up at the ceiling.

"Why is it," murmured Mr. Fleming, "that the minds of decayed gentlewomen turn instinctively to tea-shops?"

Virginia emitted an indignant gasp. "Decayed gent—really, Vernon, I don't think——"

"Metaphorically, of course," said Mr. Fleming. He sent an appraising glance round the little room. "If you ask my opinion, Virginia, you've made this place a bit too æsthetic for Welchester."

"It looks ripping," said Mr. Rodway stoutly.

An unbiassed observer would probably have agreed with him. The tea-room was furnished in a fashion whose outstanding note was one of homeliness and comfort. The dozen tables were of oak and guaranteed not to wobble; the chairs were solid and comfortably cushioned; the lights agreeably shaded. Upon the half-panelled walls hung a few old prints and pieces of good china; the small bow window, enclosed by a green curtain, held only a willow-patterned tea-pot of colossal dimensions as a token of the business carried on within. Above the door a small green signboard, inscribed simply "The Rest-a-While," projected over the pavement.

"Thank you, Tommy," said Virginia. "I've blued nearly all my capital on it,

anyway. I hesitated a long time between this and Anderson's old shop across the road, but I think this is the better position. Let's hope it'll pay its way."

Tommy coughed gently. "Of course it will," he said, "but it's all so unnecessary, Virginia. Why not marry one of us and be done with it? Me, for choice. Goodness knows, I've asked you often enough, and I bet Vernon has, too."

Virginia slipped down from the table. "Don't start that again, Tommy, please. Let me have a shot at this first, anyway. I want to find out if I'm capable of supporting myself, and this tea-shop is the only way I know of doing it."

"Well," said Vernon smoothly, "if this business lets you down, will you consider one of us as a substitute?"

Virginia shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know, Vernon. If this lets me down, I'm done, so probably I'd have to. But it won't, so why talk about it? Now run away, you two, please. I've got a lot to do if I'm to open to-morrow."

Yet when the door had closed behind the pair, she did not at once set about her labours. Instead she swung herself up to the table again and sat for an appreciable period in profound meditation, her gaze fixed absently upon one of the blue-and-white plates that adorned the wall.

When the Reverend Hugh Mackenzie Blair, Rector of St. Jude's, Welchester, contracted double pneumonia and almost immediately perished of it, he left behind him a daughter, three hundred pounds in cash, a quantity of rather battered Victorian furniture, and an enviable reputation for kindness of heart. Wherefore Virginia, when she was able to turn her attention to such matters, found herself compelled to evolve some method of extracting a livelihood from a world already overstocked with her kind. Her choice of occupations was limited by the fact that she possessed no commercial qualifications whatever. Her culinary ability was unique, and her skill at darning

socks a cause for wonder, but these are assets of small value in business circles. The idea of the tea-shop came as an inspiration, and, like all Virginia's inspirations, was acted upon with promptitude, despite the reasoned objections put forward by Messrs. Rodway and Fleming.

These two gentlemen bulked conspicuously in Virginia's scheme of things. Tommy Rodway had grown up at her side; she could not recall a time when that cheerful, muscular, dogged-jawed youth had not been her most devoted slave.

the greater portion of his energies seemed reserved for the task of persuading Virginia of his indispensability. He was a tall, slim, elegant youth, with a nice taste in ties and a supreme faith in himself. His attitude to Tommy Rodway was one of friendly condescension, for, though he was perfectly aware of that young man's aspirations concerning Virginia, he was comfortably conscious of his own advantages and confident that one day they must prevail.

Virginia herself treated both her swains with a calm friendliness. If she preferred



"'I do wish,' she said, 'that you two would stop heckling me! . . . Can't I earn my living in my own way?'"

Tommy now wrote light fiction for a living, and violated all the accepted theories of authorship by making money at it—quite a lot of money, in fact. But the bank balance of Tommy Rodway paled into insignificance before the bank balance of Vernon Fleming.

The latter had swum into Virginia's ken within comparatively recent years, but, once there, he had clung like a burr. Theoretically he acted as private secretary to his father, the guiding genius of the mammoth steel works which employed three-quarters of Welchester's population; but

one to the other, she never showed it; her smile came as readily for Tommy as for Vernon, and she was in the habit of alluding to them both as "dears." The question of matrimony she had hitherto declined to discuss, on the ground that her father's need of her forbade anything of the kind. But now, as she sat upon the little table and stared at the blue-and-white plate, she foresaw an increased difficulty in keeping the twain at bay.

"Well, never mind," she said aloud. "I don't know what I'd do without them both." She slid to the floor and looked round her



small domain with an excusable pride. "Oh, if I can *only* make a success of it! I won't charge my first customer anything, just for luck!" With which generous but unpractical decision, she set about administering the final touches.

Her first customer, as it proved, was Tommy. Entering "The Rest-a-While" at four-thirty of the following afternoon, he found Virginia, becomingly arrayed in an immense blue apron, conversing rather spasmodically with Milly, her fourteen-year-old assistant, and casting hopeful glances at the door.

"Well, well," said Tommy cheerfully, "how goes it?"

"It doesn't go at all so far," responded Virginia. "You're the first."

"Well, give 'em a chance, old girl. The significance of that teapot in the window hasn't penetrated yet. Anyway, I want some tea and all the eatables. Bustle about."

"Tommy," said Virginia, as Milly hastened obediently to the kitchen, "you don't really think I've done an idiotic thing, do you?"

"Great Scot, no! Most sensible thing you ever did. In a day or two—Hullo, here's Beau Brummell!"

Vernon, sauntering gracefully into the room, frowned ever so slightly at sight of Tommy, nodded to Virginia, and sank into a chair.

"Business good?" he asked.

"Not yet," said Virginia. "Vernon, do you think I shan't make a success of this?"

"Well," said Vernon slowly, "I don't know, of course, but—"

"I'm just telling her," put in Tommy briskly, "that in a day or two she'll have to call in the police to keep the crowd back. Can't expect too much at first."

"You're a great comfort, aren't you, Tommy?" said Virginia, smiling.

"It's what I'm for," said the great comfort promptly.

Nevertheless, as the days went by, it was borne in upon Virginia that Tommy's prediction had erred on the side of optimism. The citizens of Welchester are conservative folk, suspicious of any novelty that is not instantly comprehensible. The tea-shops of their acquaintance were of two kinds—the marble-topped-table-and-heavy-handed-waitress type, and the red-plush-seats-and-jazz-music species. Virginia's willow-patterned tea-pot was something new, and they contemplated it with distrust, regarding

it as the emblem of a refinement for which they would surely be expected to pay heavily, and which in any case made no appeal to them.

There were, of course, a few customers; but these were for the most part casual visitors to the town or unprofitable persons actuated solely by curiosity. (There was also, on the third day, a commercial traveller who called Virginia "dearie," and grew peevish when she declined to let him hold her hand.) That steadily-growing and appreciative *clientèle* of which Virginia had dreamed so hopefully remained a dream and nothing more; of those who visited "The Rest-a-While" only Tommy and Vernon came more than once.

It was to Tommy that Virginia voiced something of her disappointment when the first week of her enterprise was drawing to a close.

"I'm beginning to think," she said, "that I *have* made a fool of myself, after all. Four and sixpence to-day, five and eightpence yesterday. It won't pay the rent, let alone Milly."

Tommy, toying with his tea-cup, spoke in rather an embarrassed manner. "I—I've been doing rather well lately, Virginia. I wish you'd let me—I mean you've only got to hang on a bit, and I—"

"No, thanks, Tommy. It's good of you, but I want customers, not charity."

"I wish I knew a few more influential people in this town," said Tommy thoughtfully, "so that I could do a little gentlemanly touting. Why doesn't Vernon rally round with a few of his gilded pals?"

"Why should he? I want people to come because they like it, not as a favour to Vernon."

"Devilish haughty, aren't you?" said Tommy, grinning. "Never mind, old girl. The luck'll turn soon."

Wherein, to a certain extent, he spoke truth. It was four days later that the blow fell. Tommy, entering "The Rest-a-While" after a three-day absence in London upon matters of business, found Virginia at the window, gazing out above the green curtain. As she turned at his entry he noted that her face was pale and her eyes were strained and anxious. She gave a little gasp of relief at sight of him, for it was only when she was temporarily deprived of it that she realised what Tommy's cheerful encouragement meant to her.

"Oh, Tommy, I'm so glad you're back! It's awful!"

"What is?"

"That," said Virginia, pointing. Tommy, glancing in the direction indicated, uttered an exclamation and stood blankly staring.

Across the road stood "Anderson's old shop," empty these four months past, but now empty no longer. Bright paint and gilded lettering had transformed its dingy front. Above the window was inscribed in twisted letters of brass: "The Blue Peony Café." The window itself, draped in hangings of futurist design, held row upon row of cakes, pastries and similar edibles of an unwholesome but attractive character. By the door stood a slightly sheepish individual in Cromwellian fancy dress, engaged in thrusting handbills upon the passers-by. The general effect was one of garish splendour; by comparison the appearance of "The Rest-a-While" was positively dowdy. Tommy's prophecy had come true; the luck had indeed turned, but for the worse.

"By Jove!" said Tommy at last. "What a rotten trick! Who——"

"I don't know," said Virginia limply. "I went across and asked, but apparently it's being done from London. There's a manageress—dyed hair and red nails—and four waitresses who look as if they've just left the chorus. It was done so quickly, too. They started only on Thursday, and they're open to-day. This—this means my finish, Tommy," she added, with a gallant attempt at a smile.

Tommy snorted defiantly. "Not on your life, old girl! We're not beaten yet. Give me time to think out something. Don't worry."

Sound advice, no doubt, but not easy to follow. Virginia worried exceedingly, for there was little else that she could do. She spent the greater part of the next day at her window, watching with a growing despair the gentle trickle of custom through the portal of "The Blue Peony." For Welchester, which had ignored Virginia, seemed quite willing to investigate the claims of her competitor. The glittering window and the Cromwellian door-keeper, by arresting the eye and arousing speculation, accomplished what Virginia's willow-patterned tea-pot had failed to do; the peroxidized manageress and her exotic underlings completed the effect. Here was a novelty which Welchester could understand and approve. Virginia, staring unhappily over the green curtain, began to realise that she had employed, as it were,

a gentle whisper where she should have used a cudgel.

To Vernon, when that exquisite sauntered in for tea, she turned for encouragement; but it seemed that he had none to offer.

"You know," he said, "I told you this was too æsthetic for Welchester. I'm afraid 'The Blue Peony' people have put one over on you." He paused, drew a step nearer to her. "Virginia, why not marry me? What's the point of struggling on like this when you might be——"

"Please, Vernon," said Virginia quickly, "not—not now. But I know what you *can* do for me. Take me across to tea at that place. I want to see how they do it."

Five minutes later, as they took their seats at a bamboo table, she saw how they did it. The interior of "The Blue Peony" fulfilled the promise of the window. The walls were fantastically striped in the primary colours; the furnishings were of an elaborate and highly ornamental nature; tall screens about each table afforded a gratifying privacy to those who liked that sort of thing. The room was well filled, and the assembled tea-drinkers wore the pleased expressions of persons who feel that they are being distinctly doggish.

"I can't compete with this," said Virginia.

"Why try?" answered Vernon. "You'd better——Hullo! Observe the traitor!"

Virginia, glancing round, started, for the tall figure of Tommy had just entered the room and taken up a position in one of the recesses. An ex-member of the chorus undulated up to him, took his order, and swam away. Virginia was aware of a faint sense of shock. She had supposed that a more faithful comrade than Tommy did not exist; what, then, was he doing in this galley? She was soon to learn.

The ex-chorus-lady set a tray before Tommy and departed. She had hardly crossed the room when the peace of the gathering was shattered by a sudden, bull-like roar which drew startled faces from behind every screen and caused an elderly lady to choke on a piece of cake.

"Here! Call this tea? I asked for *tea*, not dish-water! Take it away, for Heaven's sake!"

The company, with one accord, sat up and took notice. There is no form of entertainment so pleasing as a disturbance in a public place when one is not personally involved in it. Twenty pairs of interested eyes watched the manageress hurry forward

and confront a tall, powerful young man, scarlet-faced and trembling with indignation, who was alternately brandishing a tea-pot and peering into it in a disgusted manner. Before the manageress could utter a soothing word the roar broke out again.

"And look at these! What are they—bricks?" Half a dozen small cakes were gathered up in a massive fist and allowed to rattle back upon their plate. "Upon my soul, it's a bit thick! I come in here and ask for tea, and you give me dish-water and lumps of lead! I come here to try to help a new business, and you try to poison me! Well, you can keep 'em! I'll see if that place across the road knows its job better!" And with that, before the astonished manageress could voice a syllable of protest, Tommy snatched up his hat and strode to the door, leaving behind him a silence that was almost audible.

Virginia looked at Vernon, who was wearing an expression of gentlemanly distaste and making disapproving noises, as one who deprecates these public brawls.

"Oh, the blessed idiot!" she said, uncertain whether to laugh or cry. "Come on—I must speak to him."

Tommy, overtaken in the doorway of "The Rest-a-While," started convulsively at Virginia's hand upon his shoulder and turned a distinctly confused countenance to meet her accusing eye.

"Oh, hullo," he mumbled. "Where have you—"

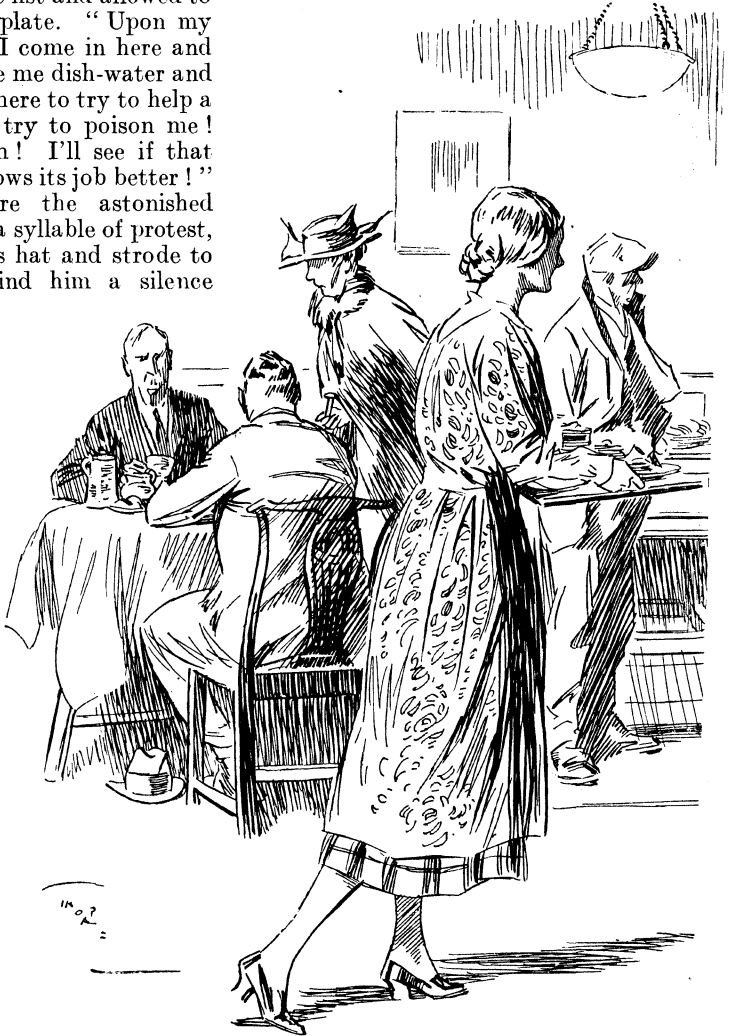
"We saw you, Tommy dear," said Virginia gently. "It

was sweet of you to try it, but you mustn't, you know. They'll think it was *my* idea."

"Great Scot!" said Tommy, genuinely taken aback. "I never thought of that! I say, Virginia, I'm most awfully—"

"Come in and have some real tea," said Virginia, pushing open the door. "You 'eserve it, after— Good gracious!"

She halted in the doorway, paralysed with astonishment. For, to employ a phrase popular in the dramatic world, "The Rest-a-While" was "crammed to the doors." Every table was occupied, in some cases by as many as three persons; there was a loud and cheerful clattering of crockery. In and out among this unexpected but welcome



"Neatly and swiftly she dealt with her customers."

throng moved the agitated Milly, her pigtail flying out behind, her small round countenance flushed with the exertion of trying to feed everybody at once. She greeted her employer with a grin of relief.

"Oh, miss," she panted, "I was wonderin' where you was! 'S'more'n I can manage by meself!"

"I should think so, poor child," said Virginia, whipping off her hat preparatory to hurling herself into the fray. "What is it—a beanfeast?"

"No, miss. They don't belong together. They just come in one by one soon after you was gone."

"Well, bless them, anyway!" said Virginia.

For the ensuing ten minutes Tommy and Vernon, leaning against the wall in the

side and survey the crowded room with a proud and contented eye.

It was as she stood thus that Vernon drew her attention to a circumstance which, in the exhilaration of the moment, she had failed to notice.

"Rum-looking lot, aren't they?" he murmured.

Now that it was thus brought home to her, Virginia began to realise that they were indeed a somewhat rum-looking lot.

Her customers comprised some fifteen men and as many women, and their most noticeable characteristic was their shabbiness. In most cases this was a genteel shabbiness, manifested by slightly frayed cuffs and badly patched boots; but there were several in a more advanced stage of decay, who wore mufflers in lieu of collars and exhibited to the public eye



"They were indeed a somewhat rum-looking lot."

absence of a vacant seat, watched a transformed Virginia at work. Neatly and swiftly she dealt with her customers, a tray in each hand, a happy smile about her mouth; she seemed to be everywhere at once and to forget nothing. In a remarkably short time she had filled every order and had leisure to pause at Tommy's

unashamed gaps in their outer garments. Taking them by and large, they were not quite the type of persons who might have been expected to patronise "The Rest-a-While."

"Half-starved, too, apparently," added Vernon.

This, again, went straight to the mark.

The shabby ones, male and female, were eating with a concentrated energy which suggested that they had done nothing of the kind for the past forty-eight hours. The table manners of one or two were also observed to be capable of considerable improvement. A puzzled little frown was born on Virginia's smooth brow; then her face cleared.

"They are rather queer," she admitted softly, "but, poor dears, they *are* hungry!"

"Obviously," said Vernon, and added: "They seem to have mistaken this place for a good pull-up for carmen."

Virginia saw Tommy flush angrily; when he spoke there was a sharp edge to his voice which was strange to her.

"Don't talk rot! Virginia wants people to come here, doesn't she? What the deuce does it matter whether they wear top-hats or corduroys, so long as they pay up?"

"Ah," murmured Vernon, "if they pay up."

"Oh, but they will, won't they?" said Virginia, in an alarmed whisper. "Tommy, you don't think they're unemployed or—or something, trying to get a free meal?"

"If they are," returned Tommy grimly, "they won't have much luck."

But this apprehension proved groundless. One by one the "rum lot" finished eating, beckoned Milly, paid her solemnly, rose, bowed or nodded amiably to Virginia, and departed. In a short time nothing was left to mark their passing but the *débris* of their meal, and there was not much of that.

"Two pounds nineteen and elevenpence!" cried Virginia in an awed voice. "Why, it's wealth! Oh, I wonder who they are, and if they'll come again!"

"Not they," said Vernon rather sourly.

But they did. They came on the following afternoon. One by one they drifted in, shuffled into their seats and gave their orders. Again Virginia attended to their needs, and again she paused for a word with Tommy, who sat at a corner table and beamed approvingly on the proceedings.

"I can't understand it," she said. "They all *look* so hard up, and yet they seem able to spend three or four shillings on their tea. And why do they come *here*?"

"Like the place, I suppose," said Tommy comfortably. "Anyway, they *do* come, old girl, and that's the main thing, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," agreed Virginia. "But I do wonder——"

She continued to wonder throughout the ensuing three days. Each afternoon saw the Shabbies—as Virginia came to name them to herself—drift in one by one, eat long and heartily, pay cheerfully and drift out again. The most puzzling feature of this invading cohort was that its *personnel* never varied; by their third visit Virginia knew every one of the Shabbies by sight. Yet they arrived and departed independently, exchanged but little conversation throughout the meal, and seemed totally unacquainted with each other. They resembled, in fact, that regular *clientèle* for which Virginia had hoped; but their patronage had another aspect which gave her food for thought. She spoke of it to Tommy one afternoon when all the Shabbies, save one enormous gentleman with the appetite of a boa-constrictor and the table manners of an Andaman Islander, had eaten their fill and made their exit.

"Business looking up a bit lately, eh, old girl?" said Tommy cheerfully, as she paused at his corner table.

Virginia hesitated before replying, a little frown between her eyes. "Ye-e-es," she said slowly. "Only—Tommy, dear, I—I'm not being snobbish, or—or anything like that, but—well, they're not *exactly* the sort of people I hoped would come. You see, I—I'm rather afraid that other people who might think of coming here would be inclined to—to think twice now, and then go across to 'The Blue Peony.' You know what people are. You *do* see what I mean, don't you?"

For a space Tommy said nothing, but sat staring at her with his mouth open. With a palpable effort he achieved speech.

"You mean these people might scare other people away? But I never thought——"

"I expect I'm being silly," said Virginia. "but you know what——" She broke off as the little bell above the door jangled briskly. "Well, here's someone who hasn't been scared away."

The newcomer, pausing in the doorway, was revealed as a youngish, stoutish, baldish man in tweeds and an expansive smile. He carried a dispatch-case and an umbrella. As he advanced into the room, it became evident that he was one of those persons about whom hangs a faint and not displeasing aroma of soap and expensive hair-oil. He raised his hat politely to Virginia.

"May I have some tea," he asked, "and some bread-and-butter?"

"Of course," said Virginia, and hastened to the kitchen. The new customer took a seat at the table next to Tommy's and looked about him in an appreciative manner. "Snug little place, this," he remarked affably.

"Very," said Tommy.

The stoutish man, who seemed of a garrulous disposition, nodded to the door through which Virginia had disappeared.

"That the proprietress?"

"Yes."

"Ah! Case of necessity, I suppose. It's queer," said the stoutish man, as one who drags into the light of day a hitherto unsuspected truth, "but when a woman gets up against it, the first thing she thinks of is a tea-shop. Fact. I'm always coming across it in my business. I'm a solicitor, you see."

"Really?" said Tommy politely.

"Of course some people take it up as a hobby, though it's not one I'd care for myself. I had a funny case of that sort a week or so ago. Young fellow—client of mine—pots of money—last person in the world you'd have thought——" The jangle of the door-bell interrupting him, he glanced round and uttered an exclamation of pleased surprise. "Talk of the devil! Hullo, Fleming!"

Vernon, entering with his usual languid grace, stopped abruptly as his glance fell upon the stoutish man. A singular expression appeared for an instant upon his handsome countenance; he looked sharply at Tommy. Then he came slowly forward, as Virginia, bearing a crowded tray, emerged from the kitchen regions.

"Hullo, Dean," said Vernon, amiably enough. "What are you doing in Welchester?"

"Brought some papers for your father to sign. I'm catching the five-fifty back. Well, how are things? How's your tea-shop going?" The stoutish man chuckled gently. "Never thought I'd have to put through a deal like that for *you*, Fleming. What the deuce d'you want a tea-shop for? It's working out all right, though, I hope? First time I ever bought a bit of property without looking at it, but you were so devilish keen. What was that silly name you gave it—'The Pink Peony'? No, 'The Blue Something'—Ow!"

"I—I beg your pardon," faltered Virginia. The stoutish man, mopping a

tea-soaked trouser, glanced up in a puzzled sort of way, aware that a sudden restraint seemed to have fallen over the company. Suddenly Vernon jumped to his feet; his languor had wholly departed and his expression was not altogether an attractive one. He looked swiftly from Virginia to Tommy and back to the stoutish man.

"Come on, Dean," he said brusquely. "I want to talk to you—privately."

The face of the stoutish man registered astonished protest. "But my tea, old man——"

"Confound your tea! Come on!" The stoutish man, gripped by the arm and almost lifted from his seat, was hustled, protesting spasmodically, to the door. The bell jangled and was still.

For a moment Virginia and Tommy remained staring at the door. The only sound in the room proceeded from the survivor of the Shabbies, at long last nearing the end of his feast and oblivious of all else. Then abruptly Tommy sprang from his chair. His ordinary placidity of manner had vanished completely; his jaw, always a noticeable feature, now protruded until it seemed to fill the room. He snatched up his hat, strode to the door, and there glanced back at Virginia.

"Back in a minute," he said, and was gone.

He was not, however, back in a minute. Almost half an hour had lagged by before he reappeared. At sight of him Virginia gave a little cry, for Tommy now wore the outward aspect of one who has been hauled violently through a quickset hedge. His collar was rent and crumpled; a small cut adorned his right cheek-bone; his left eye was half closed and surrounded by a circle of deep purple. But his grin was as good as new.

"Oh, Tommy," cried Virginia, staring, "what *have* you——"

"It's all right," said Tommy cheerfully. "I had to—to point something out to somebody, that's all."

"Vernon?" said Virginia quickly, and then went on without waiting for a reply. "So 'The Blue Peony' belonged to him all the time?"

"Looks like it."

Virginia frowned at the carpet. "I suppose," she said thoughtfully, "his idea was to drive me out of business, so that I'd have to—to fall into his arms when my money gave out. Oh, Tommy, what a dirty trick!"

"That," said Tommy, "is what I've just been pointing out to him."

A pause.

"Tommy," said Virginia suddenly, watching with the deepest interest the intricate pattern which her slim forefinger was tracing out upon the nearest table, "you—you wanted to—to marry me, too, didn't you?"

"I did," said Tommy, "and I do."

"Then—then why did you hire all those poor, dear Shabbies and give them a pound a week and their tea-money to come in here every day?"

Tommy started violently; the purple of his eye began to blend charmingly with the scarlet of his face.

"How did you——"

"That fat one told me just now, while you were pointing out to Vernon. I rather suspected it, and I asked him outright. Why did you do it, when you knew I didn't want to think of—of marrying while I could keep the shop going?"

"Well," said Tommy simply, "if you'd rather run a tea-shop than marry me, that's no reason why I shouldn't help, is it?"

"I see," said Virginia.

Another pause. More tracing of patterns upon the table.

"Tommy, dear," said Virginia almost inaudibly, "I—I *wouldn't* rather run a tea-shop—honestly I *wouldn't*. . . . Oh, Tommy, not in front of the window!"



## WAITING.

**L**ONG are the nights of sorrow,  
Weary the days that pass,  
But I have seen the snowdrops  
A-dreaming in the grass.  
Long is the time of waiting  
Till Spring has waked again.

Dead are the weeping branches,  
Sad is the wailing breeze,  
But I have heard the blackbird  
A-singing in the trees.  
Long is the time of waiting  
Till Spring has waked again.

But I have heard the blackbird,  
And seen the flowers arise,  
And I have read the secret  
Which sleeps within your eyes.  
Hope whispers through the waiting:  
Spring will awake again.

BRIAN HILL.

# SAFETY

By A. R. GRAHAM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

IT was night. Through the open doorway Carew looked out on the yard and further storehouses, sleeping under the African moon. Across the river, somewhere away beyond the row of silent granite kopjes that formed the far boundary of the valley, a solitary hyena began his agonising cry.

The nights were growing airless and oppressive, and Carew lay awake and faced the facts of the situation. The days since his arrival had passed into weeks, the whole life of the camp centring round the urgency of the dam that must be finished before the rains. It had been easy to make the excuse to himself that he had no time to think. The muggy air smelt of rain, and in the distance, once, there was a low, persistent rumble of thunder.

In the matter of the obvious difficulty of his relations with Williams he had reserved judgment, gathering impressions and gaining time. His chief was patently not quite an ordinary man, not the sort to be accepted at once, whatever his peculiarities, as on the whole a "good sort." There were things in the way—unpleasant things.

Without attempting to account for it, Carew knew that alone with the manager, at times, in the light of the mess lamp, with the wide, mysterious West African night outside, he had brief moments when he felt a little afraid. With a manner of careful civility there went a curious distrustful reserve. His sudden quick looks were disconcerting, because one didn't know what prompted them.

Out of his experience Carew believed that no armour of philosophy or indifference would count in the long run. He knew himself to be hard-working and competent in the matter of his job as accountant and secretary of the mines. Williams was evidently brilliant on the engineering side, but the chief ingredient necessary to a happy and successful enterprise lay not in these things.

Over the mess table, and in the various encounters on the works, some threatening

intangible thing reared itself between them. Carew fought for an attitude of friendly co-operation with his chief, and knew that Williams, too, essayed the amicable word and deed. This aspect suddenly appeared amusing—two middle-aged educated men pushing ineffectually at a vague and rapidly growing spectre of antagonism that remained obstinately between. Then a hint of the ugly possibilities of their solitary space-encircled exile left a vague uneasiness in its train.

He sought for some common-sense plan that might ease those strained relations, but somehow Williams eluded him, getting always mixed up in Carew's mind with a confused impression of his environment. This was not quite so odd when one reflected on the strangeness of that environment and its possible effects. At forty Carew was steeled and forearmed against disappointments, yet these new horizons had surprised him.

In the early morning on the day of his arrival, with a strange chill air flowing to meet him, the plateau had seemed both interesting and sad. There was something mean and miserable in the few shy pagans slipping out of the way into their tiny cactus-guarded villages, and the whole grey plain, with its sudden irruptions of rounded granite masses, seemed forlorn and strikingly unfamiliar.

Those first impressions kept recurring. The rocky ascent from the wooded plain below to the open rock-strewn plateau above had been made in the whitish-grey light of the morning. Later, in the blaze of the full sun, the place still perplexed and confused him and remained unconvincing—as unreal then to Carew as the lives of the clothes-less cannibals in their homes among the rocks. In a year he would know more about it, he thought, with a slight wavering in his habitual optimism, and he wondered what a year would bring.

Then the ground took on a gradual slope, and Juva camp, with a group of thatched



mud houses, and, beyond, a broken rampart of rock, showed distinctly. In the yard, he remembered, he could just see a white man mounting a horse. A dark pointed cloud of dust grew rapidly larger, and a man who sat his horse finely came up at a gallop.

"Awfully glad to see you," he exclaimed, with a quick grip of the hand. "You're just in time." He swung his horse round and together they walked on towards the camp. "I suppose they told you at the

'London office?' he went on. "I am building a dam, and the rains are coming. You won't have much time to attend to your accounts for a bit. It's all hands on deck—we've got to get the dam finished before the rains."

In a nervous, jerky manner, with sudden fidgety movements of his body, Williams poured out a long catalogue of things done and to be done. He kept darting sharp glances at Carew as he spoke—very swift, appraising glances, until, unexpectedly, the conversation flagged. Williams retired suddenly into himself as they reached the camp, and Carew, to ease a slight feeling of constraint, found himself searching for things to say.

At lunch, in the large mess hut, with its grateful tempered light after the glare outside, Williams had the manner of a considerate host, but an instinct of wariness warned Carew against claiming any of the privileges of a guest. That was the first day, and now, after a month, he was no nearer understanding and more than ever sure that there was need for it.

Lying restless and uneasy, he listened to the hyena's plaint. The sorrows of all the world, of all earth-bound weary souls that wail and struggle against inexorable Fate, found expression in that voice of despair. Bound to the wheel of life; condemned to hunger and strife, the cold of winter rocks and the burning drought of sun-scorched summer plains: chained to earth by the unconquerable



"The Beri-Beri crumpled up and fell with his head at his victim's feet."



"He fired to kill."

fear of death, ravaged with consuming ever-unfulfilled desires, the creature howled its hopeless protest to the mild bright moon.

Carew, under the spell of that wild misery, conceived a more active distrust of his whole environment. Looking back, it was certainly a queer place, this wide flat Juva valley; it impressed one with its tremendous age and unalterableness; even in the bright sunlight it wore an air of everlasting desolation.

Those granite kopjes on the far side of the stream—he knew that he had been consciously avoiding the idea they suggested, determinedly treating them as a mere fortuitous row of great rounded rocks. They were more like beasts, squatting bald and silent by the stream, headless, mutely malevolent, everlastingly waiting. But not indifferent, not unaware. . . .

"Oh, hell!" thought Carew. "This

won't do. Have a drink." He poured himself a stiff glass and, with a little shame-faced smile, added a sedative tablet and again crawled under his mosquito net.

\* \* \* \* \*

There came a feeling of crisis in the air; already the fringe of a distant tornado had muddled the water in the river and sent a brief spate tumbling through the temporary by-pass at the far end of the big dam.

On the job since daylight, Carew was nursing his swarming gangs of imported Mohammedan labour. There was no need to urge them: they understood perfectly both the urgency of the work and the mind of their master. From the first a mysterious

sympathy had existed between Carew and the coolies. They understood one another on some deep, instinctive level of consciousness that cut right across the conventions. Across a gap of two thousand years of evolution and civilisation, on a direct wide bridge of brother-feeling, ebbed and flowed a double stream of mutual comprehension. A traffic, not of thoughts, but of states of mind.

Carew organised and ordained, secure in power that was founded on the confidence and willing surrender of his men. They obeyed in the certainty of his good intention, fearing no violence to their feelings and well

Carew, sensing a danger point ahead. He knew a stage of reckless abandon was a possible development; control would be difficult.

From time to time he glanced across to where Williams' Beri-Beri gangs were working in silence. Williams, of course, would expect the same immediate service as on other days. No allowances would be made for the wild mood begotten of suspense and the electric tension of the atmosphere. Besides, Beri-Beris were different. Carew was glad to have cheery Hausas, less grim and black, less fanatical and difficult than Williams's dark wild men.



"Of course," Williams announced, "you were right. Jolly glad you stopped it so quickly."

knowing the benevolence that lay behind the discipline.

Carew's men were finishing the backing of large loose stones behind the dam. At the far end Williams superintended the more difficult and technical work of closing the by-pass.

The men were excited in the strained atmosphere of approaching rain. The heat was intense, and seemed to grow. A chanting song started amongst Carew's men, with a complicated and infectious rhythm to which they moved.

"Let 'em blow off steam a bit," thought

In the quiet enjoyment of his power it came with a disagreeable shock to Carew to find himself suddenly wondering what was up. The name of Kasallah, the Beri-Beri headman, was woven into the chant, and he fancied a note of defiance came in. By walking away fifty yards to examine a point in the workings and calling Maikerifi to him, he got his big headman alone.

"Look here, Maikerifi," he admonished, "no trouble with Kasallah's men. Understand? It's your business to stop that. If there's any bother, you'll be responsible."

The man's oblique eyes glinted for a

moment, then a touch of embarrassment appeared. "I hear, Zaiki," he murmured.

Carew persisted. "What's up?" he demanded. "Any trouble in the village?"

"A little." Maikerifi hesitated, then added: "I think they have brought their knives to-day—Kasallah's men."

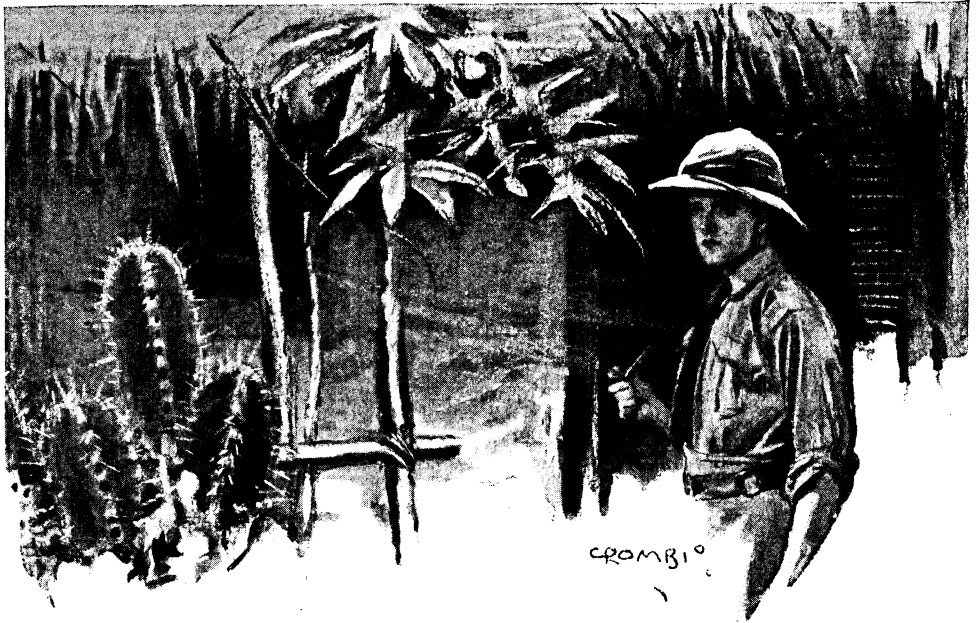
"No excuse for you," Carew snapped. "You are many, they are few. If anything happens, I'll say it's you. Understand?"

As he crossed to give a word of warning to Williams, a rolling of thunder-crashes to the north came much nearer. Across the sky a low line of black cloud, swept flat at the top by the storm wind, leaped up.

muddy spate. Carew slipped across to his quarters and came back with a small, ugly automatic. Williams watched him stuff it into his breeches pocket with a faint smile.

"Not loaded, I hope?" he inquired, but was too detached and indifferent to press the matter when Carew only laughed evasively in reply.

Peace followed the storm, moist, earth-scented and limpidly clear. Congregated on the river bank, every soul in the camp watched the mighty flood charge the dam. It roared, with underneath a monotonous, threatening hum. Apparently irresistible, it



"The voice and tone were right. It was a mere chance that Carew intercepted one of those sharp, quick looks of his chiefs."

Carew hurried across, but Williams smiled slightly when he explained. "No need," he said, in answer to Carew's suggested separation of the gangs, now that the last touches to the dam were practically complete. "They are always squabbling. No need for alarm. I know them."

"You don't," thought Carew. "You despise them."

"Take cover!" Williams shouted, and the labourers scattered to the shelter of trees and rocks; the white men ran to the camp and the security of the mess-house.

For nearly an hour the tornado lashed the earth till every drain boiled and flooded in a

hurled itself down, reared high in the air, shook a wild mane of seething spume, and rolled savagely on. The dam held; there was joy in that, and sudden almost unbearable relief in the relaxed tension of the air. Madly the men leaped and shouted; there was a wild confusion of wordless hoots and howls.

Carew was jostled and pushed. He could stand a lot of that, feeling the need and danger of the moment, as Williams did not. There was a good deal of outraged dignity in the manager's look; a little more, and it would be furious indignation.

Carew elbowed a path to his side. "Shall

I separate them?" he asked, and heard behind him that it was too late.

There was a shout, a momentary backward surge in the crowd. The first knife was out, and bloody. Still clutching a disputed shovel, one of Dunama's Hausas sank to the ground, and a lank one-eyed Beri-Beri crouched beside him, still wearing a distorted grin of hate.

A foreseen crisis was become a fact. Carew's mind was already made up in advance. He wrenched out the concealed automatic and fired in the air. A second instinctive backward wave in the crowd left the field clear. He fired to kill. The Beri-Beri crumpled up and fell with his head at his victim's feet.

\* \* \* \* \*

The crisis was past; the terrible dramatic justice of the shooting checked the rising tide of tribal feeling; it awed and subdued them.

"I am sorry," Carew submitted later to Williams. He had settled the whole affair with a high hand, while Williams had stood by helpless. "I am sorry to have done it all without your instructions. There was no time once the man was down. I had the gun. I thought——"

"Of course," Williams announced, "you were right. Jolly glad you stopped it so quickly." The voice and tone were right. It was a mere chance that Carew intercepted one of those sharp, quick looks of his chief's.

It chilled him; there was a deadly gleam of spite in that look. "Why?" he thought. "And, in any case, why should I let it upset me?"

The blackest time began then. Williams's courtesy of manner remained, shot here and there with the same occasional slight sneer, and the baffling, uninterested detachment that was almost provocative; but something seemed to have been added. Was it in Carew's own more constant awareness, or did it derive from an actual addition? This leaping shadowy thing that grew fearsomely between them—he knew now what it was that frightened him. It was hate. A live thing it seemed—something positively more than the mere absence of its opposite; a frightful thing to meet alone, in the savage waste. An abstraction become alive—it was against that that he struggled.

One day self-preservation alone seemed to demand that he should speak of it. It was later, when the pressure of work due to the abundant water in the river had eased off, and the stripping of overburden, from

the alluvials had begun to be an organised routine. Then an evening walk along the river where the five rock hills stood sentinel over the valley, in the peace of the mellow light, with Carew's pi-dog puppy playing around their feet, seemed a harmonious interlude.

Something among the stones, that left a criss-cross scent, roused the yellow puppy to a wild, ineffectual excitement. Carew stayed behind, laughing as he encouraged the clumsy fat thing.

Fifty yards ahead, Williams passed out of sight round the base of the kopje. Carew came again in view just as Williams crossed a bridge of rough tree trunks over a gully. The bridge, when the stragglers reached it, looked sound, with a carpet of rainy season greenery over the thin covering of soil. Yet Williams had been walking carefully on the side timber.

With his puppy tucked under his arm, balancing on the difficult side piece, Carew crossed, then climbed down and peered suspiciously at the under side of the bridge. . . . The ants had made a clean job of it. All but the outside member was eaten away. Not a moment would the centre have stood his weight.

"Must have known," Carew thought, startled out of his brief security. "He must have known, and gave no warning!"

When Williams disappeared, a week later, Carew summoned all his resources in a desperate search for a workable solution. Williams would come back, he felt. The early wood-gatherers from the native village had seen him ride out with a small roll of kit strapped to his saddle. It was unlikely that his mysterious errand had taken him far.

The interval was a last chance to work things out, free from the strain of immediacy. A strategic plan would have to be found. There was an array of suspicions now that bulked nearly as imposing as a certainty. It was a certainty that Williams had, on occasions, shown an inhuman indifference to his subordinate's safety. Carew understood that he was living with a man who wished him out of the way—a man whose disordered mind could allow him to stand aside and see destruction overtake his enemy, but who yet was far enough from the final madness of deliberate attack.

After all, the only solution seemed to be the one he wished above all to avoid—to break his agreement and go. It was unsatisfactory in every way and difficult to justify

to business men in a London office. "Unfortunately incompatibility between the manager and himself," it would have to be.

It would be no use explaining his suspicions and the vague horror he had of the evil thing that grew irresistibly in Williams. The man was possessed, but he could hardly explain that, though its genesis now he understood.

A loneliness of the soul, an empty heart—the board of directors would make nothing of that. Williams's years of solitude in a hostile land, in the malign bald presence of the great sentinel rocks . . . their silence . . . He would have to suppress all that. How the active evil grew in the bleak desert of the man's soul and filled the emptiness. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Carew said nothing of leaving when Williams returned. Some slight change in his bearing must have actually existed, and a faint hope began to flicker.

One day they sat quietly in the soothing dimness of the mess hut. Williams had been uncommunicative, as usual, but going about his work with a suggestion of cheerfulness about him, followed everywhere by his new-found friend, an obstreperous loose-limbed mastiff puppy. Absurdly clumsy and playful, all legs and paws, it gambolled joyfully round its master's feet, much in the way, but unrebuked.

"I went to meet a man at Fulani," Williams unexpectedly explained. "He brought a pair from home—one of the first litter."

Now in the mess hut Williams sat gravely watching the mimic ferocity of the two puppies' play. Carew's yellow "pi" he had never before noticed. He had a great contempt for the pariah breed. For a long time he watched them quietly.

Carew, under his hand, watched him, with a curious little thrill. Of course there was a difference—at last the man had got something to love. Could it be that he was

cured? That one single spark of unselfish affection had dispelled the black and bitter moods of his ingrowing, starved, and thwarted emotions?

It was an absurd fancy, probably, but Carew played with the idea, half believing in its possibility. He could almost feel a sequence of vicarious emotions corresponding to the psychic states he attributed to Williams.

In the bleak, inimical solitude of Juva, he thought, a man would be thrown upon himself, and a hard and loveless man would suffer intensely.

He imagined the surge of misanthropic bitterness growing fiercely in the oppressive silence of that unkind and ugly valley until the world of man became hateful. . . .

Then he added to this the unfailing, spontaneous affection of a puppy; its insistent playful friendliness; its unconscious but unvarying assumption of a loving relation; its never-failing demonstrative interests and emotions.

He thought of it sleeping at the man's feet, waking him in the morning with a warm wet tongue, accompanying him everywhere with an unsullied zest and a jovial suggestion that the world was all right and a very good world, full of delightful friendly people and all sorts of interesting things.

Yes, it might make all the difference.

Under the weight of Carew's scrutiny, Williams looked up. Their eyes met, but did not immediately fall away. For the first time Williams's look was open and friendly. He got up, seemed about to say something, but reddened and went out, with a last glance and a smile, diffident, apologetic, and plainly friendly.

Left alone, Carew remained a long time at the table, resting happily and thankfully in this wonderful, gracious security. After a while he picked up his yellow puppy. "Of course, *you're* only a little pi-dog," he comforted, "but *I* think you're very nice, you know."





## KENT IN APRIL

**C**HERRY and pear, cherry and pear,  
All the deep valley aglow with a flare  
White as the wisp of yon cloud-shred on high,  
Sharp in relief 'gainst cerulean sky—  
Sky veiled with mist that the background of blue  
On the horizon scarce penetrates through.

Cherry and pear, cherry and pear,  
Catch us at this time of year unaware.  
One day the orchard looms grey, and but white  
Where the lime challenges canker and blight;  
Then, the next morn, the sun's welcoming rays  
Set all the blossoming branches ablaze.

Soon will the apple buds open and wink,  
Warming the orchard to delicate pink.  
Then yon white glory drops shrivelled and dead,  
Paled by the roseate blooms overhead,  
Fainting, as now in the thickening haze  
Sunset is adding one more to dead days.

Many a man in the April of Life  
Bears the white blossoms of innocence rife;  
Fortunate he who can honestly think  
Life stains no deeper than apple bloom pink!  
Fortunate he of whose life it is said  
April's white promise ne'er turned black or red!

JAMES BLYTH.

# APRIL FOOLS

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLIER

OLD BADGER is sensible for a head-master. They're always stuffed full of fads. He often tells us to keep our folly for the first of April and try to hide it the rest of the year. It's his funny way of telling you not to be an ass. Of course he doesn't mean that we're to be fools one day a year, but that we shouldn't be on the other three hundred and sixty-four; but after saying it he can't make much fuss about what we do on All Fools' Day. Besides, he plays the giddy himself then, and makes April fools of the lot of us. I must say he does it like a sport. He has us all assemble, as usual, and waits till we are going off to our classes, and then laughs at us and gives us a holiday.

Of course we do our best to make April fools of one another. This year we were specially keen on making a fool of Paradise Lost. His proper name is Alfred Milton Brown. If he'd had an elder brother in the school, when he came to it, he wouldn't have mentioned the Milton. Chaps always fasten on anything like that.

There wasn't really any need to make a fool of him, because he was one already; but he couldn't see it. We didn't expect we could make him do that—some people you can't—but we thought we'd show him that *we* knew it.

It was my idea. I am President Conspirator of the Lower School Secret Society, so I have to take the lead in things which affect the "tone" of the school. I didn't consider that Paradise Lost's tone was satisfactory.

I don't only mean that he was one of those chaps with rough hair—we sometimes brushed it for him—and spectacles, who go messing about in the woods, or giddying with a microscope, when they ought to be playing games. It's their notion of enjoying themselves. What I objected to was that he had no respect for the proper ways of doing things. He wore his cap over his eyes, and didn't button up his overcoat, and wouldn't use the password—that term it

was "My aunt!"—and scarcely ever came to the meetings of the society.

When he did come he objected to everything that was proposed while his five minutes lasted. I couldn't shut him up, because of Law 9. "Every Fellow-Conspirator has the constitutional right to express his opinions, and is not to be shut up because they seem silly." That law was passed in 1876, when Badger was President; but last November we added, "until he has spouted for five minutes, when the President Conspirator may stop him if he's talking rot." It was through Paradise Lost that we added this. (He used to attend regularly till then.)

I made my proposal about making an April fool of him at the last meeting in March.

"Look here, Fellow-Conspirators," I said, "old Parry" (that's short for Paradise Lost) "hasn't come again, though I sent him a special notice. It's jolly cheek, and something will have to be done."

"Why not pass a law to make everybody attend?" Jessie Barnes suggested. N.B.—He isn't a girl, but his sister is, and he has her photo. We didn't believe then that she was his sister—too good-looking—but it turned out that she was. She says now that she'll be my sister, but that isn't my idea, though I've agreed to it to go on with.

"Dead against Law 1, Jessie," I pointed out. "'This Secret Society is instituted'"—I suppose that was the ancient way of spelling "instituted"—"'to protect the freedom of the Lower School.'" Parry wouldn't be free if we made him do things."

"What's the good of proposing to do things if you can't do anything?" Tommy Grant grunted. "I call that assing about!"

"What is wanted," I said, "is to make him see that he's a fool."

"A fool is just the chap who can't see it," Toby Athawes objected. "Look at you!"

I pointed out that it had been ruled over



and over again that the President Conspirator must not be called a fool at the meetings, and that even Member Conspirators were entitled to object to the name. I offered to read the minutes if he liked.

"You can do it outside and take the consequences," I added.

Toby said I wasn't specially a fool outside, and he meant that I could see that I was one—anyone could!—and therefore wasn't.

I accepted this as an apology.

"What we can make Parry see," I went on, "is that we think him one. I've a good idea how to do it."

Fatty Masters groaned.

"Your last good idea got us an impot all round," he complained.

"That," I said, "was quite outside the society, so you've no right to bring it up here; and the impot was unconstitutional, only Badger wouldn't listen to argument. Besides, this idea is only to do with Parry. *He* can't give us an impot."

"Well," Chambers said, "let's have the fool's idea—I mean the idea of our excellent President Conspirator at the time when he thinks he *isn't* being one."

"I'll put it as a resolution," I said. "I've written it out." I read it.

"Whereas Alfred Milton Brown, Modern Upper Fourth, has failed on various occasions to attend the meetings of this society: resolved that he is a fool, and that the fact shall be communicated to him. (Two m's in 'communicate,' aren't there?)

"Further resolved that the first of April is a fitting occasion for the communication."

"Still with two m's?" someone said, but I didn't take any notice of him. (It's a good way to keep order at meetings.)

"Still further resolved that the best way to do it is to make out that we think he was born on All Fools' Day, and that this can be done by every Member Conspirator sending him a birthday card on that day."

"That means all the Lower School," I remarked. "We're all here except Durham. I'll tell him when I go to play draughts with him presently." (He was on the sick list after having two teeth out.)

The resolution was carried unanimously, and so was another proposed by Sam Cohen that we should ask Mrs. Taggart—she keeps the stationery shop—to let us have eighty-seven threepenny cards at twopence each, owing to the quantity. (He got them at twopence-halfpenny.)

We arranged with the servants to bring them in to Parry while we were at breakfast, so that everyone should see how he took it; and Stout Sally—she's the head waitress at meals—brought them herself. She giggled like anything. She likes a joke, even when it's on her.

"Now we all know when your birthday is, Master Brown," she said, "and might have guessed it. Near broken down by the weight the postman was."

She put several bundles of cards in front of him, and he opened his mouth and gaped at them.

"Eh?" said Mr. Leach. He was the master taking the breakfast. "Your birthday, Brown? Ha, ha, ha! I wonder you didn't keep quiet about it!"

Brown stared at the cards, turned them over, and looked at the names.

"I thought I had, sir," he said, blinking through his spectacles. "At home we always keep it on some other day—before the first. However, it seems that someone has found out, and—I thought they'd all laugh at me. If I'd known that the chaps would all be so kind. . . . Thanks!"

He shook hands with Tommy Grant and me. We were the two sitting next to him. My word! I knew who was the April fool this time! You should have seen the fellows looking at me!

"Ahem!" said Mr. Leach. "Ahem! . . . Let me have a look at them, Brown." He went through the cards and "Ahem'd" again. We could tell that we were in for a speech. "Boys, I must say that I think you have shown a very nice feeling over this—a *very* nice feeling. You could not have chosen a pleasanter way of—er—letting your schoolfellow know that the—er—somewhat unfortunate accident of the date of his birth—his natal day—was not regarded by you as a subject of—er—I will not say ridicule—merriment—and that you did not mean to—to 'chip him,' as we say—eh?—about it. It was a sporting—a gentlemanly idea, my dear chaps. Very creditable to the tone of the school. It illustrates the good feeling, in which we masters join and, I hope, participate. Very nice indeed! I shall mention the matter to our esteemed Head, and I am sure he will be extremely gratified.

"I must compliment you, too, Brown. Kindness and—er—I had almost said chivalry—I *will* say chivalry—kindness especially is usually shown toward those who have earned it. I congratulate you

upon this singular mark of the regard and esteem which you have gained from your schoolfellows. Our Head will, I am sure, also appreciate that. . . .

"I think, perhaps, you—I—all of us—have learnt the possibility of—er—being sporting—kindly—chivalrous in our April folly, from our beloved chief. Eh ? . . . Let us give him three cheers this morning when he makes April fools of us in his accustomed cheery and benevolent manner. I—er—er—well, we'd better get on with our breakfasts, and hurry off to be made April fools of."

"No need to hurry off for fear of missing it, Lennie" (my name is Leonard), Cohen whispered in my ear. "Eighty-seven at twopence - ha'penny!" He groaned. "We've paid eighteen shillings to make idiots of ourselves, eighteen and three-ha'pence; but she knocked the odd three-ha'pence off. I paid it into the funds of the Secret Society!"

(They suggested at the meeting that it might be spent on a first of April card for me!)

"I'm one all right," I growled, "and I know it! But it won't be good for anyone who rubs it in too hard!"

The Head was so "touched" by what Leach had told him that he almost broke down when he spoke to us about the holiday.

"As we grow older, my boys," he said, "we think less of what we hope—hoped—to do ourselves, and more of helping others to do things; to do the decent thing; that's what we try to do, my boys. So let me believe that I have had a little to do with teaching you that we can be kindly even in our jesting. When people tell me that boys are young savages, I tell them that they don't know boys as I do. We understand one another, don't we? . . . 'Boys,' I say, 'are the beginnings of gentlemen.' More than that! More than that! Thank you—the eighty-seven of you—for what you have done. Brown, I congratulate you upon the esteem which you have gained from—from—from your 'fellow-conspirators.' I know what you call yourselves! Used to be one myself. President Conspirator in 1876, you'll find, if you keep the old records. Who's the President Conspirator now? I'd like to shake hands with him as representing the Lower School."

They pushed me forward. Old Badger shook my hand and patted my shoulder. "You know, Leonard," he said, "I always say keep your folly for the first of

April; but if the folly is friendly and generous, you can afford to be a fool occasionally during the rest of the year? Eh?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "I—I dare say I am!"

The Secret Society seemed to think there was no doubt about it when we had a meeting in the afternoon. (It was raining too hard to play footer.) Some of them said nasty things, and when Skinny Skinner complained that I had made him waste twopence-ha'penny I lost my temper.

"I've seven bob," I said, "and, so far as that goes, I'll pay everybody back. I'm a fool who knows when he's one."

"A fool who backs out of what he's done, and tries to put it all on the President Conspirator," Sammy Cohen said, "is no gentleman. I beg to propose a vote of confidence in good old Lennie."

They carried that unanimously, and it was put in the records of the society, and a resolution that I proposed.

"Whereas we have made the Head think that we were decent when we were not, and can't make an April fool of him by owning up, we will be decent some other time instead, when we weren't going to be, to even it."

We put the resolutions about Parry and about the Head in the extra-secret box that only President Conspirators and Vice-President Conspirators are allowed to open, because we didn't want the truth to come out in Badger's time, or he might think we *had* made an April fool of him.

However, it did come out. It's funny how things do. It happened this way.

We always have our prize-giving and Speech Day the morning of the day we break up, so that chaps can go home with their people if they come to the show; and this April we did it as usual. My father and mother and two of my sisters came—Leonora (we call her "Noah") and Winifred (we call her "Dab"). Eveline is married, and had a baby, and Dot was a baby, so they couldn't; but Noah and Dab did well by the family. Noah seemed to be getting off with Staines, the upper fifth master, and Dab with Rudd, who's captain of the school. (And she's only sixteen!)

There was a rare crowd of other chaps' people, and some of them were quite good, especially the sisters. (I mean those of the sensible age—twelve to fourteen—not old things or kids.) I rather got off with Jessie Barnes's sister. (She *was* his sister, after

"Whereas Alfred Milton Brown, Modern Upper Fourth, has failed on various occasions to attend the meetings of this society. . . ."

all! It shows that you needn't always suspect fellows.) Parry had a lot of his people, too. They weren't bad, though they all wore spectacles. They made a great fuss over his birthday cards. His mother said that she should have them mounted in about six frames to remind him of his "dear old school" and his "dear old school-fellows" when he was a man. I will say I don't think Parry swanked about the cards; but Mr. Leach was telling everybody about them. (It seems that he didn't mention the date of the birthday to Parry's people; thought they might be ashamed of having anyone born on that day, I suppose.)

We had two little plays and some recitations. I was Mark Antony in the Lower School play, and made the speech all right; but one of the legs of the thing Jenkins was on (he was Julius Cæsar, and supposed



to be dead) gave way, and he rolled off, and said "Golly!" However, I went on as if

nothing had happened. Then we had speeches, the usual awful "gup," except Cohen's uncle. He told a funny story. It hasn't really much to do with this one, but it helps with the moral, so I shall put it in. Dad always says if you know a good story tell it, even if you have to begin "That reminds me."

This was the old man's speech. (He had a big nose and he was very fat.)



"Now, you boys think I'm going to make a speech, but I'm not. I'm just going to tell you why I never make speeches to boys. I found out before some of you were born that they misunderstand me.

"Years ago I went home rather early one summer afternoon. My son, who was about six—now it's four years since he left this school—ran to the door to meet me.

"Let's go in the garden and play cricket, dada?" he proposed.

"How about your home-work?" I wanted to know. I always used to run over his 'prep' with him in those days. Do you know, boys, I sometimes wish those days were back!

"I've done them," he said.

"Umph!" I said. "I think I'll hear them first."

"You needn't, dada," he declared. "I'm sure I know them."

"Well," I said, "if you know them, it won't take long to hear them. Come along."

"I asked him some questions about his tasks, and I am sorry to say he couldn't answer any of them, except that he thought Queen Elizabeth was 'somewhen before this one'!"

"You young scoundrel!" I cried. "What do you mean by telling me that you know your lessons when you don't know a word of them?"

"You don't understand, dada," he complained. "I know them, but I can't say them."

"Do you mean that you could write them down?" I asked.

"No-o," he owned, "I couldn't write them down, but I know them."

"What!" I cried. "You can't say them, and you can't write them, and yet you consider that you know them? That's what I call *not* knowing them. Now, look here, my boy, if you talk like that, you'll be called a fool!"

"Ah," he said, "we aren't 'lowed to call each other fools at the Prep."

"He rubbed his hands; evidently felt he'd scored off 'the old man' that time!"

"Well," I told him, "there are such things—lots of them. Only they don't always know it. My grandmother used to tell me that there were two sorts of fools—the fool who knows that he's a fool, and the fool who doesn't know that he's a fool. She called that sort a silly fool, a tomfool! "You mayn't be able to help being a fool, Abraham," she always said, "but don't be a tomfool." It's bad not to know your lessons, but it's worse not to know when you don't know them. It's just the same with other things than lessons. If you know you're wrong, you can put yourself right; if you don't, you can't. See what I mean, my boy?"

"Ye-es," he said. "Now shall we go and play cricket, dada?"

"Well," I gave in, "if you'll learn the

home-work properly afterwards, perhaps we'll have a game while it's light. I'll change my coat."

"He walked along the passage to wait for me at the back door. His eldest sister had been listening, and she talked to him there.

"Well, Davie," she asked, "do you understand what dada means?"

"Yes," he said solemnly. "There's two sorts of fools. There's the fool who knows he's one. That's me! And there's the fool who doesn't know he's one. That's dada!"

Well, that was old Cohen's speech; and I think when I come to the affair perhaps you'll own that it does come into the story. Besides, I don't believe the old boy was a fool at all. He was only humbugging us into taking our medicine. I know I shall remember what he said whenever I am inclined to be a cocky ass.

Anyhow, the next speech does come into the business. It was made by old Badger, and it was about the great Hallowses, the explorer, who used to be in the school. (You can see his name cut on the wall in the Fourth Prep. Room, and he sent the tusks that are over the hall clock.) He had sent home a lot of lion and tiger skins, Badger told us, and some were for his "old master and comrade," and some were for other masters; but one of each was for the boys who were "at the old place."

"I don't want them to be prizes for book lessons," he wrote, "because I have found out during my travels that the most useful things which I learnt at school didn't come out of books, but from the sporting and kindly customs and gentlemanly instincts which I picked up from my masters out of school and from my school-fellows. I suggest that you give the skins to those whom you judge—you always knew us better than we knew ourselves—to be the most popular boys in the Upper School and the Lower School respectively."

Badger said that he had given the matter most careful and anxious thought, especially in the case of the Lower School. As regards the Upper School, since Rudd was both head and captain of the games, and had always been remarkably popular both with his elders and his juniors, he felt no hesitation in awarding him the lion's skin. (There was tremendous applause, for nearly every fellow in the place would have voted for old Ruddy.)

"In the case of the Lower School," Badger said, "I have had much more

difficulty, "but I feel compelled to award the tiger skin to one whose extreme popularity I did not realise until a few days ago, as practically selected by the votes of his schoolfellows. It was brought to my notice that upon his birthday Alfred Milton Brown was sent a card by every boy in the Lower School. I know of no precedent for such an occurrence, and it obviously evidences a singular regard from his schoolfellows. I must therefore award the skin to him."

There was applause, of course, but it was mostly from the visitors, I noticed. Old Badger noticed it, too.

"I have a word to add," he said. "There is another lad in the Lower School who is unusually popular among his comrades. I might add among his masters, although his inventive and ingenious disposition leads him into mischief occasionally. However, it is never ungentlemanly mischief. His popularity has been shown by his election as president of a representative society, the existence of which is a secret to me now, but once was not. In 1876 I was its president! I think our presidencies follow fairly similar lines.

"But for the birthday card incident, I should have considered that the holder of this important office—I am not joking in calling it that—was the natural recipient of our old comrade's present, and I am going to honourably mention his name—Leonard Palmer Leonard."

That was me—I mean I.

The chaps cheered me like anything. The upper forms even gave me a clap or two. (They aren't too swanky to notice a chap in the Lower School at our place, and old Ruddy himself sometimes talks to me about the line that ought to be taken for the credit of the shop.)

"Oh, my aunt!" Cohen groaned. "You'd have had it, Lennie, if we hadn't gone and been a bally set of April fools! My aunt!"

Several of the chaps near me said things like that. And old Rudd waved his hand to me across the hall. It was nearly worth a tiger skin to have him do that, anyhow. Still, I couldn't help feeling a bit pippy, and as if I'd like to punch Parry's head for him. That was shabby of me, and I wouldn't have *done* it, you understand. If you bowl a bad ball, you can't bear malice against the chap who scores off it.

Presently the hullabaloo stopped, and then Parry stood up. His hair was nearly on end, and he was trembling all over, and

kept opening and shutting his hands. Mind you, it takes some pluck for a Lower School chap to get up and butt in before the whole school, and about a thousand visitors, and girls, too. They can make you feel sillier than fellows can, or even masters and parents. It's not their sniggering so much as the way they turn their noses up and don't say anything. But old Parry was in a *mortal* funk.

"Please, sir," he stammered, "it's all a mistake! They didn't send the cards to me because they liked me, but because—because I didn't go to the meetings of the Secr—of the society that you don't know about now. They made out that my birthday was on the first of April to call me an April fool, you see, sir! . . . Well, I thought I'd make out it was, and make fools of them! It's the twenty-seventh of March really, sir."

Oh, my goodness! We did laugh. But we didn't go on long, because Badger held up his hand, and Parry held up his, too.

"Let our friend Brown finish his gallant speech," Badger said.

But we had to cheer again then. We were glad to know from the "gallant" that the old man looked at things the right way. (He very often does.)

"I only wanted to say, sir," Brown said, "that I'm not the one, but Lennie—I mean Leonard. He's the most popular."

He sat down with a bump and put his mug in his hands. (His ears were as red as a lobster.)

I couldn't stick that. So I jumped up.

"Please, sir," I said, "I *was* more popular, perhaps, but now it ought to be Para—I mean Brown!"

Then a most awkward thing happened for me. There was a dead silence, except for mother speaking to father. Of course women must talk! Everybody heard her.

"God bless him!" she said.

(She meant me, not Brown.)

However, the chaps cheered and cheered very sportingly, to cover me up. I've never felt such an ass in all my life. I forgot to sit down till Cohen and Barnes and someone at the back hauled me on to the form; and then Badger got up again.

"I have sent round to my house," he said, "for another tiger skin. I shall have great pleasure in presenting one apiece to Leonard Palmer Leonard and Alfred Milton Brown—in spite of their making an April fool of me. But I knew I was one before!"

(We all yelled "No, sir!")

"That's the better kind of the two," old Cohen chipped in.

"Ah," said Badger, "of the *two*. Yes! . . . Mr. Cohen has said that there are two kinds of fools, but I think there is a third—the kind that Leonard and Brown have proved themselves—the fool who is sound in anything concerning his honour as a gentleman!"

Well, that's the sort of fool I'm going in for, anyway; and if Winne (that's Winnie Barnes, of course) gives up the sister stunt (she owns she isn't so strong on keeping strictly to it), we're going in for it together. We think, perhaps, we'd have enough sense between us not to be fools at all, except on the first of April.



## A WOOD IN SPRING.

**H**ERE in the Springtide wood  
 The little stream's a-flood.  
 Lo, fresh to all men's eyes  
 The mocking blue of skies,  
 The thrusting leaf, the sheen  
 Of grass, a lyric green.  
 The snowdrop lives its hour—  
 Whiteness become a flower.

How welcome the soft day;  
 Roof, walls, how needless they!  
 The wood-deep runnel clear  
 How dear, the hearth less dear  
 To happy men that brood  
 On sylvan youth renewed,  
 And for a while forget  
 Age, and the Springs that set.

ERIC CHILMAN.

# MESALLIANCE

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "*Valerie French*," "*Berry and Co.*," "*Jonah and Co.*," "*Anthony Lyveden*,"  
"*The Brother of Daphne*," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

LADY ANN MINTER alighted thankfully.

After the burden and heat of the third-class carriage the evening air of Suet was like a drink of water—out of a dirty mug. Still, it was water: and the journey down had been hell. After all, the tip of a beggar's finger made a desirable continent for a certain rich man.

Her husband took her arm and shepherded her out of the press.

"See now, kid," he said tenderly, setting her dressing-case down, "you jus' stay 'ere an' watch out for me. I'm off to find your trunk."

"All right, Bob," said Lady Ann Minter.

Alone for the first time since her marriage, she strove to marshal her thoughts. These, however, were mutinous. The flight of opportunity, the welter of noise and movement on the fringe of which she stood undermined her authority. It was vital that she should think quickly and clearly, that she should make up her mind. Everything was depending upon immediate decision. But the very premises were denied her. She was wild to face the facts: but the facts danced and flickered and would not be faced.

Hideous, blazing queries blinded her fumbling brain. She found herself reading them aloud.

"Why didn't I think of all this? How can I possibly bear it? What shall I do—do?"

And then the scorching answers.

"God knows . . . I must . . . *Nothing* . . ."

She saw her father standing with his back to the log-laden hearth—saw his white, set face and his tightened lips. There were roses on the mantelpiece behind him, and a Morland hanging above—a spreading oak and a cottage and a jolly brown horse . . . and a woman was standing in the doorway, holding a little boy, and a man on the horse

was smiling . . . and they were all alone and happy, under the spreading oak . . . very poor and simple, but alone and very happy. . . .

She saw her aunt on her knees with tears running down her face—saw the china ranged orderly upon the walls—smelt the pot-pourri she had made the year before. The evening sun was pouring into the chamber, planting badges of gold on plate and bowl and pitcher, turning the closet into a queen's parlour. . . .

She saw the register office and the registrar's face like a mask, heard the cameras click as she and Bob passed out, felt the insolent stares of the waiter who brought them lunch. . . .

The journey down had been frightful. The heat, the discomfort, the everlasting talk. . . .

The coaches had been standing in the August sun and had become veritable ovens. Such air as entered them was baked instantly. Yet the fight for seats had been savage—one woman had been knocked down, and children had been dragged and trampled. Bob had secured two places because he was strong, but one had been seized before his bride could take possession. A violent dispute had followed, while Ann stood between the seats smiling nervously and ready to die of shame. Indeed, but for the timely eviction of another inmate, the sudden activity of whose diaphragm disclosed the moving fact that he was considerably the worse for liquor, relations must have been strained beyond the breaking point. The spectacle, however, of the wages of intemperance had proved that touch of Nature which can twitch discord into harmony, and for the next twenty minutes various appreciations of the episode revealed a cordial unanimity which was almost affecting. That a family in a corner



should at the last moment have been rudely reinforced by the irruption of two small boys was sheer misfortune. In the absence of seating accommodation it had been impossible to protest against their occupation of the open windows—delicious tenancies, of which they took full advantage, boisterously exchanging reports and frequently subletting their coigns of vantage to one another. The corporal enfiling of the compartment which such arrangements necessitated had soon developed into a game, the pursuit of which their kinsfolk made no attempt to check until a particularly deliberate collision had afforded one tenant a pretext for hitting the other on the nose. The consequences of the assault had been frightful. The combatants were dragged yelling apart, the aggressor was cuffed into tears more explosive than those of his victim, both were shaken and reviled, the flow of blood was arrested by a handkerchief which had already been used as a dressing and was swaddling an ounce of bulls-eyes, hideous threats were issued, provocative comments upon upbringing were audibly exchanged. Only the production of food had at all relieved the tension, but under the healing influence of snacks good humour had more or less revived. A baby-in-arms had been given a ham sandwich—at least, the apex had been introduced into its mouth. It gnashed and sucked contentedly, while protruding shreds of fat liquefied upon its chin. A girl had abstractedly devoured plums and put the stones in Ann's lap. A married couple opposite had seemed incapable of underestimating the capacity of their mouths, thus inconceivably embarrassing their efforts to keep the ball of *badinage* rolling and distorting such retorts as they felt must be expressed into fresh dummies for their opponents' thrusts. Before the meal was over the train had run into a tunnel and, after slowing down to a crawl, come to a dead stop. Someone had giggled, and a burst of hysterical laughter had succeeded the soft impeachment of gallantry. In the midst of it all Ann had felt Bob's arm steal round her and his lips on her cheek. He had kept his arm about her for the rest of the trip. . . .

And now—

Again she tried to concentrate—haul her thoughts into line. They came sluggishly.

Married . . . she was married . . . married to Bob—Bob Minter, one of her father's grooms. She had done it because she loved

him. She had married him in London that morning, and— That morning? Was it possible that it was only that morning? Was it only that morning that the registrar had bowed and. . . .

Her thoughts began to slip away. She let them go.

She stared at her wedding-ring . . . touched—plucked at it desperately.

The hideous queries and answers leapt like rams possessed.

"Why? God knows. . . . How can I? I must. . . . What? *Nothing*."

For an instant panic fear looked out of her steady gray eyes.

Then—

"All serene, kid. I've got the goods," panted Bob. He turned to a shambling porter, thrusting a truck. "Say, mate, where d'you keep your taxis?"

"Not 'ere," said the porter. "Might get a keb."

He preceded them wearily.

"You—you've got rooms, Bob?" faltered his bride.

Her husband's eyes shone as he slid an arm beneath hers.

"Course I 'ave, kid." He hesitated. Then, "I didn' mean to tell you, but . . . I won' be able to give you the 'ome you ought to 'ave—servants an' cars an' whatnot. More's the pity. But jus' this once—for this fortnight I've done my lady proud." His voice began to tremble with excitement and pride. "You've got the bes' room in Suet, darlin'—the best on the 'ole parade. There ain't a fine lady in the town that's got such a room. The Countess of 'Ampshire used to 'ave it, an' all the 'igh muck-a-mucks 'ave bit an' scratched to get it whenever they come this way. Firs' floor—looks right over the pier. . . . An' not a chair moved, nor a picture. You'll 'ave it jus' the same. You see, my aunt she keeps apartments—the best in Suet: an' when we fixed things up I wrote to 'er, told 'er on the Q.T. an' said I wanted 'er firs' bedroom—jus' for you. An' she wrote beck an' said that you should 'ave it if she 'ad to turn people out. She's a good 'eart is old Aunt 'Arriet. Givin' it us at a cut price, too—season an' all. An' we'll grub with 'er an' the girls an' Uncle Tom—I tell you, kid, they don't 'alf know 'ow to live. Why, you'll be as fat as butter 'fore we go beck to Town."

Ann's brain reeled.

'Grub with her and the girls and Uncle Tom. . . . Grub with. . . .'

The station-yard faded, and the Morland above the mantelpiece stole into view—the spreading oak and the cottage and the girl standing at the door . . . and the man on the horse smiling . . . the humble intimacy of the scene—the simple happiness—the precious privacy . . . *privacy* . . .

She was outcaste, of course—excommunicate. The order had been made that morning. She had signed it herself deliberately—with open eyes. More. She had done it gladly. She wanted to be expelled, that she might live with Bob—but under a spreading oak . . . in a

fortune. Others could skulk in cottages and under spreading oaks; but she must go to Suet—fashionable Suet and have the best room in the place . . . looking over the pier. . . . It was the most loving compliment he could pay.

By a supreme effort Ann drove the consternation out of her eyes, shook off the cold clutch of Horror and squeezed her husband's arm.

"You're very good to me, Bob," she said steadily. "I think you were wonderful to think of it all. We shall—shall be grand having the best room in Suet."



"With tears in his eyes, he had begged her not to smash his life; and she had smiled and kissed him."

*cottage . . . alone, as outcastes live . . . not—not at Suet . . . not 'grubbing with Aunt Harriet and the girls and Uncle Tom' . . .* She thought Bob had understood that. She had told him so plainly—a child could have understood. And yet. . . .

The pathos of his failure hit her between the eyes. He couldn't grasp that she didn't want 'a show'—couldn't appreciate such heresy. Her words had meant nothing. Because she was his great lady, she must have as fine a show as he could compass. Other women must be made jealous of her

Bob coloured with delight.

"Oh, it's nothin' much," he said awkwardly. "I 'spect you've often 'ad rooms pretty near as good. But I—I like to think I'll be giving you the best . . . jus' for once."

He broke away and made for a cabman, who, learning his applicant's vocation, might see his way to take them on trade terms.

Ann watched him dazedly.

Nothing, it seemed, was to be spared her—nothing.

The discovery that she had made one

grand, imperishable mistake stunned her: the savagery of the penalty she was to pay made her soul blench: but the ghastly, mocking irony of poor Bob's solicitude cut like a cold, wet lash. Foul tongue in cheek, the spirit of Satire was possessing his honest heart. Beneath this hideous influence, thought, word and loving deed emerged grotesque, cross-gartered. He ushered some tender travesty with every breath. The eager pride with which he strove to make Fate split its sides tore at Ann's heart. It was pathetic—with the pathos of the dying dog that whimpers to think it cannot rise to make its master sport. And just because it was so heartrending he could not possibly be told. Blow, lash, claw had to be suffered unflinchingly. He—he could not be told.

As for her love——

Ann put a hand to her head, as though to focus the truth.

Her passion for Bob was gone. The flax was not even smoking. The fire had been quenched.

Ann felt cold with shame.

Bob had been so fearful, and her love had cast out his fear. He had never doubted her love, but only whether that love could survive the strain. And she had fought to convince him, till he had been convinced. He believed heart and soul in its ability. . . . heart and soul. . . . And now—Bob had been right. Her dauntless love had not endured eight hours—not *eight hours*. . . .

Of course she hadn't appreciated. There had been a misunderstanding. She had assumed——

The excuses leaked like sieves. The truth poured out of them.

*It was she—she only that was to blame.* She hadn't thought of all this. Her father had. So had her aunt. So even had Bob—poor, weak, unsophisticated Bob. With tears in his eyes, he had begged her not to smash his life; and she had smiled and kissed him and smashed it and smashed hers too.

The Sting of Death sank to a pin-prick, the Victory of the Grave to an unfinished game—beside the horror of the fare which Life was serving.

It seemed, indeed, that she was to be spared nothing.

Bob returned beaming. His wooing of the cabman had prospered, for, as luck would have it, the latter was in a holiday humour. He had been upon the point of returning to his stable, and 'Pier View' was on his way. He would drive them for nothing.

He was, as Bob put it, 'a proper sport.' It soon appeared that he was a wag also.

In these circumstances it was most natural that his consent to oblige a pal should automatically promote him to the standing of a familiar. He celebrated his elevation heartily by a series of jocular allusions to nuptial bliss and intimate reminiscences of his own union, by tying a posy to his whip and desiring lustily to be informed of the shortest way to the Abode of Love.

The bystanders roared.

Encouraged by this reception, he stopped outside the station, and acquainting a policeman with the facts, begged the loan of his white gloves, his own, as he explained, 'bein' put away by me valet wiv me 'untin' things. You know wot these servants are, officer.'

He was really extremely funny.

For the rest of the way he contented himself with a lively and affectionate communion with Lady Ann's trunk—an effort which, to judge from the scandalised shrieks of mirth which followed them, went very well with such pedestrians as they passed. Indeed, their progress was triumphal.

Bob enjoyed it thoroughly, as one enjoys being rallied upon a possession of which one is justly proud. He was all sheepish smiles. Ann was all smiles, too. Her face ached with the strain. Every nerve in her body was squirming. She was upon the edge of hysteria.

"God knows . . . I must . . . *Nothing*. . ."

Satire spat upon his hands and laid fresh hold of her tail.

Upon arrival at 'Pier View' it proved unnecessary for three several reasons, all of which were evil, to ring the front-door bell. In the first place, they did not and were not expected to use the front door. Secondly, a small boy, who was at once wearing a tight green blazer and dirty flannel shorts, swinging idly upon the area gate and contemplating the seething pageant of pleasure-seekers under the comfortable auspices of a generous complement of butter-scotch, took one look at husband and wife and then fell down the steps, bellowing "'Ere they are!" Thirdly, the little knot of passers-by which would long ago have collected, had the equipage but halted, began to give the driver an appreciative hearing.

Bob was out of the fly and stooping to set Ann's dressing-case by the area gate; as he turned, the small boy reappeared, followed by a large business-like countenance which

gave the impression of being able to look extremely unpleasant but was at the moment wreathed in winning smiles; flanking this, rose two other feminine faces, open-mouthed, peering—one fat, snub-nosed, jolly-eyed; the other discontented and pinched; the little knot of bystanders was swelling into an obstruction; the cabman was relating an anecdote which pointed the wisdom of the removal of boots before retiring. . . .

Ann saw it all as in an ugly dream.

It occurred to her that the train-journey and this were but the prologue—the induction to the play she had commanded, the devilish comedy in which she was to play the lead. The induction had been startling, but the play. . . . The play was to be the thing. Of course. Plays were. The prologue was nothing. So far she had hardly appeared. When the curtain rose on the play. . . . She found herself wondering if there would be an epilogue.

Suddenly, with a frightful shock, she realised that the curtain was up, that the stage was waiting . . . waiting . . . that this —was—her—cue. . . .

*Crowd laughs at cabman's sallies. Aunt Harriet and the girls reach the top of the area steps. Bob is busy with her trunk. Gramophone next door starts 'YES! We have no bananas.' Cabman stops his discourse, listens intently and then says 'Ark! The 'erald angels sing.' Crowd yells with delight. ENTER The Lady Ann Minter. . . .*

Ann pulled herself together and got out of the cab.

Then she turned to the driver and put out her hand.

"Thank you so much for bringing us," she said most charmingly.

It was a fatal gesture—because it was the act of a lady.

The laughter snapped off short: the grins faded: the genial atmosphere stiffened with a jar.

The cabman's assurance fell from him like a shirt of mail. His drollery collapsed before a mountainous wave of respect.

He took off his shabby hat and touched the slight fingers.

"Thank you, m'm," he said humbly.

Amidst a gaping silence Ann turned to the steps.

She could hear the breathing of the bystanders, feel their resentful stares burning her face. She had spoiled sport, embarrassed, turned the frolic she should have led into a ceremony they could not follow. She had

drawn the whip of her superiority, flourished it, laid it across their shoulders. Only the gramophone continued to spout its ghastly pleasantry, like a clown mouthing in a death-chamber.

*'We've broad beans like BUN-ions cab-BAH-ges and HON-ions. . . .'*

Before this master-stroke of Satire Ann could have burst into tears. She had striven wildly to rise to the occasion, only to shatter—to let the whole thing down. . . . The awful hopelessness of her position flamed. Envy, Hatred and Malice, then, had been appointed her equerries. Not only was she to suffer: she was to cause suffering, breed discontent, induce ill-will. The efforts which she must make were doomed before they were made not only to fail but to turn to her condemnation. And she could do nothing, because there was nothing to be done. She had sold her birthright, but she could not sell her birth. Her style, her speech, her plumage could not be doffed. She was a peacock in daw's feathers—and the daws would fiercely resent her condescension.

*'But YES! We have no bananas. . . . We have no bananas to-day.'*

*'Would resent'? Were resenting. . . .*

As she crossed the pavement—

"Oh, 'aughty," said someone. "Sten' beck fer the Lady Ermy Trudeau."

There was a stifled giggle.

Her face flaming, Ann stepped to her hostess, who was palpably intoxicated with the prospect of communion with her guest and determined unmistakably to adorn a plane upon which lack of opportunity alone had hitherto prevented her from ambling. It was important that her new niece should at once appreciate that there was not the slightest necessity for her to step down. Here and now she must be made to realise that her aunt was fully qualified to step up.

Out went her hand chin-high.

"Ow-de-doo, Lady Ann. Pleased to make your acquaintance. I 'ope you aren't very fatigued, but it's so 'ot for travellin'." She turned to rend the bystanders. "Stare a bit 'arder, won't you? An' where's your kemp-stools? Albert, ketch up that dressin'-case before it's pinched." The small boy sprang to do her bidding. "An' don' beng it on the steps. Come in, Lady Ann." She began to descend, driving the girls before her. "I 'ope you left 'is lordship well."

"Very—very well, thank you," stammered Ann.

"Oh, I'm gled of thet," said Aunt Harriet

ecstatically. "It's so nice to think of one's deer ones——" She swung round to glare at the railings. "Albert, go back an' see who threw them shrimps. . . . 'Orrible, vulgar brutes!" She stood fairly heaving with rage. "Reelly, the people that comes to Suet nowadays, Lady Ann—well, I don't know where they was born. I didn' know there was such people. Push you as soon as look at you. Reelly, one's better at 'ome. Walkin' out's no pleasure at all. But come in, deer. Come in an' meet the girls."

She guided Ann through the passage and into a parlour.

The table was laid for a meal and there were covers for eight.

Standing uneasily together as though for protection were the two girls and two young men.

The sour-faced girl was adopting a nonchalant air. Hand on hip, eyebrows raised, lip curled, she sought self-consciously to veil her self-consciousness. Her jolly-eyed sister appeared to be upon the edge of hysteria. Her face was set in a nervous frozen grin, her hands were twitching, her eyes riveted upon the floor. The youths were, if possible, still less at ease. Both were tall and weedy. One was dark and throaty—a quality which his belief in a tennis-shirt Byronically open at the neck, with the collar carelessly arranged above that of his coat, served to accentuate. His long hair was unparted, oiled and brushed straight back. Two inches of close-cut side-whisker and an amazing length of finger-nail argued æsthetic tendencies which the soulful expression of his fallow face was intended to declare. He gave the impression of being able to groan efficiently. The other had a jaunty, more worldly air. His tiny moustache was waxed, his fair hair parted in the middle and curled into twin horns. He was clearly conscious of his superiority and, that there might be no mistake about it, was languidly sucking his teeth. His collar—a soft creation of broad black and white stripes—his red and chocolate tie, the golden kerchief flowing from his breast-pocket showed that he knew how to dress.

"These are me daughters," explained Aunt Harriet, "an' their gentlemen-frien's. May. . . ."

The sour-faced girl advanced and shook hands—then turned, flushing violently, to toy with a book.

"Ada."

The jolly-eyed girl gulped, giggled, started forward, missed Ann's hand, tried again, clutched it anyhow and withdrew.

"Mr. Barnham."

The æsthete thrust forward, stumbled, bowed over Ann's fingers and turned confusedly away.

"Mr. Alcock."

Mr. Alcock delighted in showing how things should be done. Here was a brilliant opportunity of at once asserting his superiority, astonishing Ann, who would be thankful to find such unexpected *savoir-faire*, and dispelling any skulking idea that to carry off such an encounter was beyond his powers. He stepped forward briskly.

"Pleased to meet you, indeed," he said warmly. "'Ow's Piccadilly?"

It was a difficult question to answer.

Before Ann had found a reply, there was the appalling explosion with which laughter which has been denied its usual channel forces the narrows of the nose. The strain had been too great. Nature had asserted herself. Ada had broken down.

Before her relatives' horrified gaze, she abandoned herself to succeeding paroxysms of mirth, to which, to his undying shame, Mr. Barnham began sniggeringly to subscribe.

The devastation of gentility was too awful.

Mr. Alcock blenched, recovered, turned slowly purple and broke into a gleaming sweat. Ann regarded him as though fascinated. Two red spots of dishonour burned upon May's cheekbones. Aunt Harriet was making a rattling noise. . . . All the time convulsion after convulsion shook the destructive to her foundations. And Mr. Barnham shook also.

"Aida!"

The rasp in her mother's tone brought her up short. The former was glaring unutterably.

As her daughter's abominable emotions began to subside, Aunt Harriet turned to her guest.

"Hoverwrought," she said in the tone of one who is publicly excusing whom she intends privately to flay alive. "Takes after 'er father. Shell we go upstairs. Lady Ann? I'm sure you'd like to take a look at your room, an' we can 'ave a quiet chat."

"I'd love to," said Ann.

As she came to the door, she glanced round.

Mr. Alcock had slunk to the window and was savagely employing a service-dressed

brother of the golden kerchief. Ada, red-nosed and bloated with exertion, stared bleareddly upon the ground. May was regarding the cornice with smouldering eyes. Mr. Barnham appeared to be about to prophesy no good, but evil.

"So—so long," said Ann pleasantly.

The others stared back.

"Me deer," said Aunt Harriet, labouring up the stairs, "I want you to feel that this is a nome from 'ome. Merriage is a wrench. One leaves a lovin' 'ome for a strange country. An' you do feel strange. I remember me own merriage. Down we goes to a little one-eyed place with never a soul as knew wot a lady was. I tell you I felt that lonely I could 'ave cut me throat. But you've no call to do that. You're among frien's 'ere that feels as you do an' likes the ways you like. I give you me word, Lady Ann; vulgarity makes me sick. An' there's so much of it to-day."

Arrived at a door upon the first floor, she opened it and passed into a large, dingily furnished bedroom facing the sea. The brown wall-paper was bruised and soiled: the threadbare carpet was overlaid with cheap rugs: a voluminous muslin valance swaddled the dressing-table: wardrobe, washstand and bed recalled the several salerooms whence they had come: a rusty horse-hair couch sulked in a corner: spotted engravings of Royalty being baptised or married or churched hung upon the walls: a cord of one of the Venetian blinds had broken, and the slats were splayed: a window of the bay was open and admitting something of what seemed to be the uproar of a gigantic fair.

"There," said the proud hostess, mechanically laying folded hands upon the abdominal wall. "Simple, but tasty. I remember so well the fir'st time the Countess of 'Ampshire was 'ere. 'Mrs. Root,' she says, 'people 'as an idea that we titleds must 'ave display. Completely wrong. Now, my bedroom at 'Assocks is jus' like this—quiet, but distanggy.'"

"It's delightful," said Ann, looking round. "I—I don't feel strange at all."

"Couldn't if you tried," was the triumphant reply. "It's so—so res'ful." She sank on to a chair. "An' now, me deer, make yourself at 'ome. This is your private room in 'Oliday 'Ouse."

"You're very kind," said Ann.

"Don' mention it."

The abrupt injunction was disconcerting. It was not meant, of course, to be obeyed.

On the contrary. . . . After searching desperately for words with which to flout its blunt authority—

"I—I wonder where Bob is," faltered Ann. "If I could have my dressing-case. . . ."

"Now, don't you go makin' any toilet," said Aunt Harriet. "We'll be goin' out presently. Not that I don't like changin'," she added hastily, "because I do. But Tom—my husban' 's that slack. In course I'm afraid I've fell away, but there you are. Where's the good of me makin' meself tidy, when 'is idea of dressin' is to take 'is collar orf?" She sighed heavily. "But there, there," she added. "We all 'as our crosse to bear."

"Well, I'll just wash my face and hands," said Ann. "One gets so dirty in the train."

"Just as you please," said her hostess. "I'm afraid it's waste o' time—the pier's that filthy—but it'll freshen you up."

She fought her way past the dressing-table and thrust her head out of the window.

"Albert," she yelled.

"'Ullo," rose the small boy's voice.

"Don' say 'Ullo' to me," snapped Aunt Harriet.

"Whatsay?"

His great-aunt drew in her breath.

"Where's Bob?" she demanded.

"Gone to 'ave a drink with the driver."

"Well, leave that there trunk an' fetch up Lady Ann's dressin'-case."

"Whatsay?"

Albert's inability to hear unwelcome tidings was a maddening complaint.

His great-aunt looked volumes.

"You 'eard well enough jus' now," she said in a shaking voice.

"Bob tole me to wait 'ere."

"An' I tell you to fetch up Lady Ann's case."

"Whatsay?"

Aunt Harriet left the window and erupted from the room.

Albert put the road between himself and 'Pier View.'

Ann took off her hat and flung herself face downward upon the bed. . . .

"Why didn't I think of all this? *God knows*. How can I possibly bear it? *I must*. What shall I do—do? *Nothing*."

It occurred to Ann suddenly that it was all intensely funny. The comedy of the situation was rich. Albert—Aunt Harriet—Mr. Alcock alone would have brought down the house. Surely, her sense of humour, . . .

Somebody laughed—wildly.

Ann perceived that here was another of Satire's subtleties. Nothing so obvious as tragedy was to be her portion. She was to be tormented by a roaring farce—a farce that was founded on tears and broken dreams and all the cureless agony of passionate regret. It was the Dance of Doom, if not of Death.

When Aunt Harriet reappeared, lugging the dressing-case, she was manifestly conscious that, but for her guest's whimsy, she would have been spared great provocation, distasteful exercise and—most important of all—a menial task. She certainly managed to smile, but it was a crooked business. She felt that her mask had slipped.

So soon as Ann was ready, the two descended—thoughtfully. The ladylike bond of union which Aunt Harriet had forged seemed to have stretched. All Ann's efforts to contract it but served to emphasise its slenderness.

Mercifully Bob was in the parlour, exchanging cheerful reminiscences with a jolly, fat man who proved to be Uncle Tom.

Her husband presented Ann, with shining eyes.

For a moment the fat man looked at her. Then he inclined his head.

"Your servant, me lady," he said respectfully.

"Rot," said Ann. "You're my uncle," and kissed him then and there.

"Oh, you peach," said her uncle, and kissed her back. With his arm about her, he addressed the rest of the company. "Jus' leave us alone a few minutes, will you?" he said. "There's one or two 'ymns we want to run over together."

This allusion to a recent scandal in which a local pillar of the non-conformist church was involved naturally evoked great merriment.

Ann tried to be thankful

It also inspired Mr. Alcock.

"Break away, break away, there," he cried.

Uncle Tom screwed round his head.

"Percy, me lad," he said, "you 'aven't a chance. This little girl likes 'em fat."

Squeaks of delight contributed to another explosion of mirth.

They sat down to tea hilariously. . . .

"Do you 'unt at all?" said Mr. Alcock, presenting a dish of shrimps.

"I've given it up," said Ann.

"'E means by night," said Uncle Tom.

The laughter was renewed.

"Oh, give over, pa," wailed Ada, "You've give me the 'iccups."

It was too true.

Seats were left: remedies were commended: the victim was conjured—to no purpose. Spasm succeeded spasm with sickening regularity.

"Old your breath," said Bob.

Ada inspired and sat like a graven image. The others watched her in a silence pregnant with expectation.

Her eyes began to protrude. . . .

"Stick it," said Bob. "Stick it."

A dusky flush began to steal into her face: sweat gathered on her brow: she was squinting. . . .

At last she let her breath go with a loose rush.

For a moment she breathed peacefully. Then a belated spasm convulsed her frame.

There was a rustle of consternation.

Suddenly, with a blood-curdling roar, Mr. Barnham smote upon the board

In a second all was confusion.

Ann started to her feet: Aunt Harriet screamed: May recoiled against the wall: Bob and Mr. Alcock regarded their compeer open-mouthed: Uncle Tom, who had been in the act of drinking, was coughing and cursing and wringing tea from his moustache.

What was more to the point, Ada stopped hiccuping.

When Mr. Barnham pointed this out, the fact was coldly received.

"Enough to make anybody stop anything," snarled Aunt Harriet. "Don't you know 'ow to be 'ave?"

"In course I do," said Mr. Barnham. "You never see me do that before."

"No, an' don't you never let me see you do it again," was the tart reply. "Nasty, vulgar 'abits."

"But I done it to stop 'er 'iccups," protested the ill-used youth.

"I don't want to know why you done it," observed his hostess. "You done it—an' that's enough. You oughtter be ashamed of yourself. . . . May, give Lady Ann a cut of beef."

With goggling eyes, Mr. Barnham proceeded in some dudgeon to the consumption of a hunk of dry bread, presumably with some vague idea that this mortification of the flesh would stimulate a recognition of his injury.

Conversation revived.

Mr. Alcock spoke of sport, commending the pursuit of lawn-tennis with the air of one who has tried everything and come to the

reluctant conclusion that that pastime is a better antidote to *ennui* than any other.

Uncle Tom recounted a dispute which had arisen in the saloon bar of *The Goat* regarding elephantiasis. His narrative slid naturally enough into a vivid comparison of such cases of this complaint as had come under his notice or that of the other patrons of the saloon bar. Aunt Harriet, even more naturally, proved able and willing to supplement his list with personal experiences so distressing as to suggest that an inscrutable Providence had chosen her among women to be harrowed in this peculiar way.

May related how someone had passed the remark that a new char-a-banc service was to be instituted between Suet and Lather, and asked Ann if she was fond of motorings.

Ann replied with enthusiasm.

"I think it's tremendous fun."

"D'you 'ave the Blue Fleet in Dorset?"

"I—I don't know," stammered Ann.

"Do we, Bob?"

"Yes, dear," said Bob. "That boulder wot 'it your coopy was one o' the Blue Fleet."

There was an awful silence.

"Your coopy?" said Uncle Tom.

"Er, yes," said Ann desperately.

"Nice, tight little car, too," said Bob.

"Wish I could give 'er one now."

"A.C.?" ventured Mr. Alcock.

"Forty-fifty Rolls," said Bob.

There was another silence.

"Must 've bin delightful," said Aunt Harriet shakily. "Still, there's things beside cars."

"Rather," said Ann heartily.

"Such as wot?" said Uncle Tom.

"Well, all isn't gold as glitters," snapped his wife.

"That's true," said Mr. Barnham sagely.

"Woddyer mean?" said his host.

"Wot's true? A Rolls motor coopy's good enough fer mos' people."

"Well, an' who said it wasn't?" said May.

"Look 'ere," said her father. "Your mother said there was things beside cars."

"So there is," said May. "Fine clothes an' fine relations."

She laughed spitefully.

"Shut up, May," said Ada. "She never said she 'ad a coopy. It was Bob wot started it."

"That's right," said Bob, red in the face.

"I said it, an' where's the 'arm?"

"No 'arm at all," said his aunt silkily. "If the troof was known, I spec' she 'ad two or free cars."

Her husband suspended mastication and stared at Ann. Then he spoke through the cud.

"Didjoo?" he demanded.

"No, indeed," said Ann swiftly. "I think I was jolly lucky to have one."

Uncle Tom nodded approval.

"You were that," he said emphatically. Ann breathed again. "Why, my ole dad thought 'imself mighty lucky to 'ave 'is own tip-cart, an'—"

"Don't be stoopid, pa," said May. "Granpa was only a common man."

Her father gasped. Here was parricide.

"I mean," said May sweetly, "he wasn't a nurl."

"I'll bet he was just as good," said Ann.

"So 'e was," cried Uncle Tom. With an effort he emptied his mouth. "You 'ear?" he raved, turning upon May. "You 'ear, you undootiful girl? 'Ere's a lady wot knows a nurl when she sees one an' don't 'ave to go to Boots' Lendin' Library to find out wot 'igh life means. An' she says 'e was as good. 'Common man'!" The iteration of the objectionable phrase reprimed his piety. He wagged a cautionary forefinger. "You jus' be careful, young woman. Don't you go gettin' ideas above your station. Jus' because you go orf to dances an' cinemas o' nights an' keep a tame mug 'andy to buy you cheap sweets—that don't make you no better than wot you are. *Ladies is born.* . . ."

Never was enemy so hoist with his own petard.

Never was the seasoning of bitterness so sloshed into the pot.

Never was a silence so ominous as that which followed the reproof.

May's face was purple, her eyes narrowed to green points of steel. Aunt Harriet was sweating with indignation: her mouth worked. Ada looked scared. As though to belie a particularly hang-dog expression, Mr. Barnham muttered and snorted beneath his breath. Mr. Alcock sneered upon his finger-nails. Bob was smiling sheepishly. And the unconscious author of the unsavoury stew sat back regarding the company with eyes that saw nothing but a forgotten deference to authority awakened by the old lion's roar.

Ann tried not to tremble.

Were there no lengths to which Satire



would not go? Had Irony no mercy? God! What a tune they were calling! All Hell was fiddling in the orchestra—and she had to pay . . . pay. . . .

A sudden peal at the bell saved a situation which was under sentence of death.

"That's Mr. Mason," said Ada. "I 'ope 'e's brought Miss Gedge."

She rose and left the room.

The cold, strained silence slid into the blessed hush of curiosity.

Then—

"*I ain't nobody's darlin', I'm blue as can be,*" feelingly rendered by an indifferent baritone, floated into the room.

"That's 'im," shouted Uncle Tom gleefully. "Come in, yer bounder. There ain't no room, but we can't keep you out."

Mr. Alcock and Mr. Barnham laughed half-heartedly.

Mr. Mason entered, tripped, recovered himself, gave the threshold an awful look, placed his hat upon the hand which Mr. Barnham was extending, side-stepped to the fireplace, pressed an imaginary bell and said, "Waiter, bring a non-skid 'ammock and a moonlit night: I've just been married."

Even Aunt Harriet laughed—rather reluctantly. In fact, good humour was bundled into the room, neck and crop.

Mr. Mason was tubby and of a cheerful countenance. He was neatly dressed in a sponge-bag suit which was too tight for him, a low double collar, a spotted bow tie and sand-shoes. A cane dangled from his pocket and a faded carnation drooped from his buttonhole.

Miss Gedge was stout, frankly vulgar and, but for a cast in her eye, would have been a good-looking girl. She was the personification of contentment and goodwill. A droll pertness of manner enhanced her charm. She had, moreover, a most infectious laugh. This her squire exploited vigorously. The two carried all before them.

There were but eight chairs, but the shortage, so far from presenting difficulty, smoothed an irregularity away. Lady Ann took her proper place, namely, her husband's lap, while Ada, with many giggles, subsided into that of Mr. Alcock.

The tamboureen was rolling. . . .

The flow of hatred had been arrested: soon the leak was being plugged—with the very underlinen of Sensitiveness, delicate, rosy mysteries, ripped from a girl's back.

"Yes," said Mr. Mason. "Children is bits of 'eaven. I was a very large 'unk. I remember Mother sayin' so when she found

'er boots in the oven. She didn't put it that way, but . . . ."

Amid shrieks of laughter, he was conjured to 'give over.'

"Oh, isn't 'e awful?" panted Miss Gedge. "An' when we're out 'e does pass such dreadful remarks. Las' Saturday afternoon a gentleman's 'at blows off. 'Stop it,' cries someone. 'Not me,' says 'Erbert, 'I've lef' me gas-marsk at 'ome.'"

There was a gust of merriment. As it died down, a fat guffaw of delight announced Uncle Tom's perception of the point.

"'E ought to go on the 'alls," said Mr. Alcock. "Make 'is fortune."

Mr. Mason shook his head.

"Why," he said, "I should be stole in a week. An' there'd be pore Mabel——"

"I should worry," said Miss Gedge. "But you can't 'ave your 'Untley an' eat it too, can you, May?"

"Not likely," said May. "Look at pore Mrs. Stoker."

"There's a tregedy," said Aunt Harriet. "An' three children an' all."

Mr. Barnham, who had been awaiting his chance, groaned eloquently.

"So when 'e talks about the stage," continued Miss Gedge, "I says 'You go, me little friend,' I says, 'and 'ere's 'appy days. But don't you call roun' for me on Monday evenin', 'cause this is where you get off.'"

A round of applause acclaimed this admirable sentiment.

Mr. Mason blinked very hard.

"Ah, well," he said, "I s'pose it'll 'ave to be 'oly orders after all." He adjusted his collar, peered at an imaginary book and looked up earnestly. "Brethren, we will now sing *Cease thy tickelin', Jock*."

This justly occasioned great laughter.

As it subsided—

"Oh, I've bought a new straw," said Miss Gedge. "A regular Kiss-me-quick. Not that I wanted to, but since Benk 'Ooliday the other ain't gone with my scent. I wore it to 'Astin's, you know, an' 'Erbert's brother was 'oldin' it when 'e come over queer. Of course, memories is very sweet, but . . ."

Amidst squeals of delight—

"She 'ad 'im on the brain," explained Mr. Mason.

The paroxysm which succeeded Uncle Tom's appreciation of this remark was so prolonged as to suggest that his labouring lungs were in need of assistance, and there was a general feeling of relief when he was able to assure his anxious ministers that he would let them know when he was dying.

As order was restored—

"I say, is this a smoking-carriage?" said Mr. Alcock and looked round, grinning, for approval.

Once the ball was rolling, the question usually went. The great thing was not to ask it too soon. "And when men have well drunk, then. . . ."

The laughter was renewed.

"I should 'ope so," said Uncle Tom, taking out an enormous calabash.

Cigarettes were produced.

Mr. Barnham made bold to offer his case to Ann, who declined smilingly.

"She'll 'ave one with me," said Bob.

He lighted a Gold Flake and, after inhaling luxuriously, put the cigarette to her lips. . . .

Ann winced. Another tender intimacy clapped in the common stocks. . . .

May accepted a cigarette from Mr. Mason, who had an unfinished cigar. Together Ada and Mr. Alcock enjoyed the cigarette till lately reposing behind the latter's ear.

Beneath the soothing influence conversation became less boisterous. Little coteries sprang up. Miss Gedge and May exchanged murmurous confidences. Mr. Barnham listened to Aunt Harriet. Uncle Tom and Mr. Mason discussed 'closing time.' Ada played with Mr. Alcock's hair and squeaked or whispered according to the nature of the sweet nothings with which he plied her. Breathing endearment, Bob fondled and kissed Ann's fingers and presently pleaded for her lips.

"They won't mind," he insisted. . . .

At length Mr. Mason looked round.

"Well, ladies and gents," he said, "what's the pier done? I think an evenin' with the movies with a little footwork in between the shows 'll just about see me 'ome."

The suggestion was greeted with action.

Chairs were drawn back, laps shaken and smoothed, pardons begged.

Ann was feverishly considering how best to announce that she was weary and would like to retire, when Bob put in his oar.

"An' this is my show," he said expansively. "I'm goin' to stan' treat to-night."

There was a murmur of deprecation.

Quick as a flash—

"Well, I'm sure that's very 'andsome," simpered Aunt Harriet.

"Now, look 'ere, Bobbie lad," said Uncle Tom, "don't you go rushin' in. Ten to one's a bit thick. Jus' 'cause it's your day out, that ain't no call for you to go treatin'—"

"Why not?" cried Bob. "Why, I want

you all to remember this day, I do—the 'appies' day o' my life. Ten? I wish you was fifty. I've beaked a winner to-day—drawn the firs' prize in the bigges' sweep on earth. . . . Look at 'er standin' there! Ain't she a peach? An' you want me to 'old me 'and for a matter o' thirty bob!"

"Ooray!" cried Mr. Mason. "'Ooray! An' mind—the firs' Benger's with me."

Laughter and cheers confirmed the acceptance of hospitality.

Feeling as though she had dashed herself against a wall, Ann stammered something about getting her hat.

"Oh, it's right opposight," said Ada. "We never wear 'ats jus'—"

She stopped with a jerk.

Aunt Harriet filled up the hole.

"I'm afraid it soun's very lax, Lady Ann. but, you know, this year the residents proper 'ave to a great extent given up wearin' 'eadgear of nights. In fac', I think we should be remarked on. . . ."

"Oh, I don't mind in the least," said Ann. "In fact, I like it much better."

After all, what on earth did it matter? What did anything matter? She was married . . . married to Bob . . . tied for life . . . life: and she was boggling about going uncovered!

They passed out of the house, Aunt Harriet delaying the procession to enjoin a sickly charwoman to clear, wash up and set the table for six.

"For six," she repeated meaningly, trusting thereby to promote such operation of mental arithmetic as would convince Mr. Barnham and Mr. Alcock that they were not expected to return. "Oh, an', Mrs. Perch—I've measured the beef."

"Very good, Mrs. Root," said that lady, breathing through her nose. "I'll bet you 'ave," she added under her breath. "Rotten ole toad."

When the door was shut, she shed a few tears of chagrin. It was a beautiful bit of beef.

The pier was indeed conveniently close. In less than a minute they stood before its gates.

The negotiation of the turnstile offered opportunities of humour none of which were missed. The surly controller was rallied, rose and was appropriately mocked. His impotent indignation, hastily but vigorously served, followed them down the pier.

After the fresh sea air the breathless reek of the cinema was stale and stifling. It was the Saturday evening of a blazing week, to

whose rare invitation the audience had healthily responded. Ann could have choked. She sat between Bob and Uncle Tom, with the former's arm about her and her left hand in his.

A melodrama was being shown: some of the scenery was superb—a forest at dawn, a cool reach of some river with sunlit woods about its banks, the spreading lawns of a great mansion blotched with the silhouettes of stately trees. The dazzling luxury of the interiors, the perfection of their appointment, the admirable manner of the men-servants, the smooth rush of the cars turned the fruit of memory into the grapes of Tantalus.

Ann sat dumb before the cruelty of Fate. It was true, then—she was to be spared nothing. Every slender tack that could be hammered was to be driven home—punched into her heart.

She had a terrible yearning to express her agony. She wanted to moan and twist her hands. She wanted to fall upon her knees and clasp her head. She wanted to breathe "My God. . . . My God. . . . My God. . . ." She wanted to stammer her woe—change this fantastic hell into the similitude of human sorrow—picture it in words and tears—wrap it in the napkin of blessed, familiar speech.

Bob was importuning her.

"Give us a kiss, sweetheart."

Fainting, she gave him her lips.

"Now, then, break away, there," rasped an attendant. "If you can't wait, there's plenty of room outside."

It was not the man's fault. Complaints had been received and forwarded. Orders had come down that morning that any abuse of the obscurity indispensable to the performance was to be sternly checked. It was, of course, rather a delicate matter. Custom, if not prescription, was to be set by the ears. Still, the remark was well received—with hysterical laughter.

A wave of hot blood surged to Ann's temples. Her mind staggered. When she came to, she found herself praying for death.

The reflection that a week ago Bob would not have—had not done these things preened its grim self before her. Ann realised suddenly that familiarity was breeding assurance, if not contempt. From being 'my lady' she had become 'my—my missus.' More. For the first time since their engagement Bob was among his own. Hitherto he had been upon parade. Now he was

relaxed—comfortable. His own had received him. He was sliding into their ways—naturally. It was not a case of infection, of evil communications corrupting manners. They were his—*his* ways. Of course. His ways. He saw no harm—there *was* no harm in them. They were wholesome enough. Only—they were not her ways. . . .

The melodrama came to an end, and they filed out. The sheet had announced an interval of fifteen minutes.

The *salle de danse* was crowded. They thrust and were thrust within its walls.

Bob could not dance. Mr. Alcock, however, was clearly treading firm ground. The assurance with which he spoke made this still more manifest.

"Em I to 'ave the pleasure, Leddy Enn?"

What did it matter? What did anything—Besides, how could she refuse?

They danced to a rousing fox-trot—as well as they could. There was little room, and steering was nothing accounted of on Saturday nights. Couples went as they pleased. Many seemed rapt—unaware that they were not alone: others heaved and revolved, careless of collision and greeting every bump with incorrigible cheer: some frolicked openly, to the unveiled disgust of the more intense, who sneered upon them as they passed.

By such as were not dancing Ann's presence upon the floor was instantly remarked. As she went by, she saw heads nodding, arms being caught, fingers pointing, ribs being nudged. The infection spread to the floor. Couples began to stare—to draw apart. Very soon she and Mr. Alcock were dancing in a little space of their own. As if by magic, this revolved with them. Had he pleased, Mr. Alcock could have left the space standing. That he did not so please was natural enough. The youth was intoxicated. His thirsty vanity, ordinarily but scurvily found, was in its cups. His supercilious muscle was strained to breaking-point: his eyes were almost closed: his sneer, the droop of his parted lips beggared description. It was his hour.

The dance ended with a crash, and the two returned to their party.

As Ann was desperately raking its environs for Bob—

"Well, Lady Ann," said Aunt Harriet, "what d'you think of our floor?" She laid her hand familiarly upon the girl's arm. "Not so bad for ole Suet?"

"I—I think it's very good," said Ann, observing with horror that the space, which

had momentarily disappeared, was beginning to surround her again.

Aunt Harriet saw it, too, and raised her voice.

"You know, Lady Ann, I'm so glad to 'ave you at last. I've got so much I want you to 'elp me with. You know, livin' all the year round in the country, one's ideas seem to get into a groove. In course, Taown's the 'ub. There one's in touch with things. 'Otels and emporiums is up to date. People 'as got to move. One's only to take a walk down the street or pop into a laounge. . . . But 'ere—nothin. An' after a bit, Lady Ann, stegnation sets in. I tell you," she added, with a mischievous laugh, "I'm not goin' to give you no rest. You'll be wore out before I'm through."

"I'm—I'm sure I shan't," faltered Ann, trying to smile and wildly conscious of an unnatural hush. "Indeed, I——"

Mercifully, the band recommenced its labours.

"Shell we take another turn?" said Mr. Alcock.

Ann lifted up her head.

"To tell you the truth," she said, "I'm a little tired." She looked round anxiously. "I wonder where Bob is."

"Gone to 'ave a drink," said Ada.

"Let's go an' fin' them," said Aunt Harriet.

They passed out after the manner of Royalty, a lane being made.

Mr. Alcock was dispatched in quest of the revellers, while Mr. Barnham, now sole warden of virtue, took up a central position and stared about him with an air of apologetic defiance.

After a suspiciously long absence, his colleague returned to say that the other squires were not to be found.

"They're gone to the Arms, the greedies," decided Aunt Harriet. "That's where they're gone. Never mind."

A rich clearance of Mr. Barnham's throat declared that he was labouring of plan.

"Let's take a stroll down," he suggested, "an' ketch them as they come back."

Economy had driven him to speak.

A premature return to their seats meant that the girl who sold chocolates would offer her tempting wares. This offer he would be bound in decency to frank. The acceptance or rejection thereof would rest with May—and Mr. Barnham did not trust May. . . .

His misgivings were well founded.

"Oh, who wants to stroll?" said May.

"Let's get back before the crush. I'm sure I've been trod and shoved enough for one night. Something crool, people are."

It was not magnificent: it was not even war: it was pure oppression—hitting the poor in spirit below the belt.

Aunt Harriet acclaimed the suggestion, and the move was made.

Two minutes later Mr. Barnham was eased of two shillings. He parted, sweating, with a hunted look in his eyes that went to Ann's heart.

She found herself wondering what, when he had married his bully, his life would be like. She saw him mute and shrinking before the eternal abuse, standing jaded and hungry without his own house, trying to summon the courage to enter in, dreaming of the happy days when he could buy exemption with a two-shilling piece. . . .

For a blessed instant her mind left her own tragedy to suck at his. Then it leapt back, buzzing. . . .

Aunt Harriet was purring hypocrisy, lying, dressing her lies in dirty splendour, fouling well after well. Ann responded mechanically, conscious that her spiritless dissembling would not have deluded a child, physically and mentally unable to play up to such form. An innocent-looking chocolate had caused Miss Gedge's jaws to conglutinate—a comical condition of things which she was turning to generous account, throwing May and Ada into convulsions of girlish laughter. Mr. Alcock was confiding to Mr. Barnham confessions of a well-dressed man. . . .

A frightful feeling of loneliness flung into Ann's heart—a new kind of desolation, of which her philosophy had never dreamed. Sympathy was clean gone. Nobody, nothing within sight meant anything to her—or she to them. A desert island had animals and trees and skies and yellow sands: an empty house had silence and memories and dreams to offer: she had things in common with a wilderness—would have got on with Death. But this. . . . There was an awful emptiness about this crowded hall, a ghostly dreariness about this blithesome flow of soul which scared and terrified. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks. . . .' She was parched—mad with thirst. The muddiest trickle would have served. . . . But the saving fountains had stopped playing, the once innumerable rills were dried up.

At last the lights were lowered, and the talk died down.

Ann tried to shuffle her thoughts and find a way.

Instantly her brain told her that there was no way to be found.

She fobbed the tidings off and began again.

A way. She must find out a way. Where to? A way out—*out*. Suicide, Flight presented themselves and were set upon one side. Flight presented itself again—almost immediately. Ann permitted herself to consider Flight. . . . With a shock she realised that now, if ever, was the time. The hall was in darkness: Bob was not there: before Aunt Harriet could follow, she would be clear of the place: outside, it was night and there were crowds to mingle with: pursuit would be vain. . . . With a hammering heart, Ann began to wonder if there were night trains to Town. . . . Then, with a hideous leer, Flight faded away. *Her things—her money—her hat, even, was at 'Pier View.'* To get them was out of the question. The house was locked: Aunt Harriet had the key: if the charwoman was yet there, she did not know Ann by sight: besides— Oh, it was hopeless, of course . . . hopeless.

Ann decided desperately that she must talk to Bob. She must try to explain—teach, if possible, the moment he reappeared, before a worse thing befell. She could not face that awful parlour again. Aunt Harriet alone. . . . Besides, the meal would be of the nature of a wedding-feast. Its pre-lusive character would be insisted upon. Jocular references would be made: sly digs administered. It would be hideous—revolting. Ann's flesh crept.

The moment Bob came she must ask him to take her outside—away, out of the crowd to where they could have a talk. Perhaps they could get a room somewhere, out on the skirts of the town. He wouldn't understand, of course. To repulse the kindly advances of his own kin! Deliberately to jettison 'the best'! All his instincts would jib at such heresy. But to-night—for a week, perhaps, she could override those instincts. As for the future—

Three figures appeared, boggling, at the end of her row. Then they began to push their way along.

Mr. Mason came first, announcing in apprehensive falsetto that if anyone pinched him he should call the women police. Uncle Tom followed, heaving with merriment and inquiring cheerily if there was room for a little one. Bob came last, laughing very

much and repeatedly asking his companions if they were right for 'Emmersmith Broadway.'

Cries of 'Shut up!' and 'Sit down!' resounded.

An attendant came bustling. . . .

Bob subsided into his seat and mopped his face.

Then he laid a hand on Ann's knee.

"Well, Beauty, 'ow's things?" he whispered.

He reeked of liquor . . . reeked.

Something deep inside Ann seemed to give way.

"Didn' min' my leavin' you, did you, sweetheart? Just 'ad a quick one or two to celebrate. They're a couple of 'earties, they are—'Erb Mason an' Uncle Tom. I tell you, kid, you've got orf with them all right." He slid an arm about her and held her tight. "An' I don' wonder, by gosh. There ain't much left to the others when you're around."

Uncle Tom was speaking excitedly—from a great way off. His breath. . . .

"Bob, Bob! She's bin showin' 'em 'ow to dance. Danced about with young Alcock, an' the others give 'em the floor." He slapped his thigh. "Glory, but I wish I'd bin there to see 'er put it across them—see my peach of a niece showin' ole Suet wot's wot." He thrust an arm through Ann's and covered her hand with his. "Strike me dead, sonny, but you're a lucky dog. I tell you—Hullo!"

Ann had fainted.

The fresh air revived her immediately, but, though she implored the others to leave her husband with her and return to their seats, they would not hear of it. After a little, she abandoned the attempt. There was no reason why they should not have returned. Indeed, the girls were obviously disappointed. There was no reason at all—except that she was doomed. That was most clear. Every slightest chance was to be crushed. She had signed on and she was to go through the hoop. Resistance was futile. That terrible ring-master, Satire, knew his job.

They proceeded leisurely towards 'Pier View.'

Mr. Mason and Miss Gedge left them at the pier gates. Bob parted with the former effusively, swaying a little as he turned. Could she have done so, Ann would have begged them to stay. The two were scrupulous: they had authority: she trusted them. Miss Gedge was kind, human, no

fool. Mr. Mason's vulgarity was but a paste-board blade. . . .

As the area steps were won, two figures emerged.

These proved to be those of old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Allen, of Bung Street, Plaistow, who, finding their call ill-timed, were upon the point of departure.

The encounter was cordial in the extreme.

A kill-joy might have suggested that Mr. Allen was under the influence of drink. The way in which concluding words of sentences occasionally rebelled against the deliberate precision with which he enunciated their predecessors might have aroused suspicion in a bigot's mind. So might the colour of his nose—and other things. But—he was an old friend; and among friends . . .

The Allens were bidden delightedly to supper; Mr. Barnham and Mr. Alcock were cavalierly sped.

The party descended carefully, Ada and May tarrying for a moment with their lingering swains presumably to temper the cold wind of dismissal and make further assignations.

Arrived at the door of the parlour, Ann shook off the sense of nightmare and begged to be excused.

Aunt Harriet crushed her entreaty, as a boa-constrictor his prey.

Food. That was what she wanted. A good bite of food. Ann had eaten nothing at tea—she had watched her. Nothing. That there fainting was nothing but want of food. Ann must trust her. She knew. Hadn't she been a bride? How well she remembered how when— But in *course* Ann wasn't hungry. Why, that was the surest sign. Food. A nice cut off the joint and a glass of stout. Why, she remembered when she was married. . . .

Her hostess was determined that Ann should grace the board. The latter gave way listlessly. What did it matter? What did anything matter? What—

She took her seat dully, with despair sunk in her eyes.

She sat on her uncle's right and within his reach. From the opposite side of the table Mrs. Allen regarded her beadily. A plate of beef was given her and butter and bread. Stout was poured into her glass. They bade her eat and drink. She did so obediently. If they had bade her sing, she would have lifted up her voice. She was beaten. She had passed the end of her tether. Her spirit was broken down.

The meal proceeded.

The presence of the Allens was providing a merciful distraction from her estate. She had not the heart to be grateful. It was, she knew, only a temporary release—a postponement, big with hell. Satire was playing with her, as a cat plays with a mouse.

Conversation warmed. The output of geniality was amazing. Righteousness and peace kissed one another.

Aunt Harriet expanded. Uncle Tom broadened. Bob began to laugh indiscriminately. With increasing difficulty, Mr. Allen remembered bygone days.

As the joint reconstruction of a more than usually side-splitting episode was concluded—

"Dearie me," croaked Aunt Harriet, wiping the tears from her eyes, "'ow many years is that ago?"

Mr. Allen regarded Uncle Tom. To survey and measure the past was beyond his powers.

"Now, don't go addin' up milestones," said Uncle Tom. "I'm an optimis', I am. There's a good few tides come in since that little lark, but I don't feel no older."

"You would if you lived i' Plaizow," said Mr. Allen.

"No, I shouldn't," said his host. "'Cause I should blow down to jolly ole Suet a bit more often—an' 'ave one with me ole pals."

He laughed jovially.

"Yes, you would," said Mr. Allen. "The iron o' the city would enter in-in-injerso."

He looked round defiantly.

"I don't know about the iron," said Uncle Tom hilariously, "but I'd see the Scotch didn't. I bet that 'ld go the right way."

"Trust you," said Aunt Harriet.

"Yes, an' touch the spot, too," added Uncle Tom, shaken with merriment.

"Oh, did you ever?" said Mrs. Allen, deliciously shocked.

"Yes, you would," said her husband, throwing back. "When you saw the people bein' groun' to powder an' the rich swillin' idow."

The reference was obscure. Possibly Mr. Allen was imperfectly remembering the fate of the Golden Calf and confusing his allusion with the imagery of oppression. For all that, it carried.

"That's true," said Uncle Tom soberly.

"Is the distress very prenaounced?" said Aunt Harriet,

"Wicked," said Mr. Allen. "Women an' children's life-blopd is bein' suggaway."

As though to neutralize such drainage, he drank deep and mournfully.

"Wot's four poun' ten?" he continued. "'Ow far does that go?"

"Ho," they says, 'but look at wot you 'ad before the War. Why, we've doubled your pay,' they says. Per'aps. But wot they don' say is, 'An' we're chargin' you double, too, for the necesserities of life.' An' you ask if there's blussuggy goanon."

"But surely," said Bob, "it ain't the blokes as pays the wages

as shoves the prices up. They 'as to fork out, too."

Mr. Allen braced himself.

"So they says," he said darkly. "That's their bettle-cry. But it's a deliberate 'ave. They're all in league, they are. The rich man's 'and is agains' the pore, an' always 'as been." He smote upon the table. "Walk down Bon' Street, brother, an' take a look at the cars. See 'ow the idle rich lives an' moves an' 'as their vile bein'. Caount the Rolls-Royce." He paused dramatically. "But don't you go gettin' in their way. You may 'ave 'elped to pave it wiv blood an' teers, but it's not your street—'cause you're only a common man."

There was a frightful silence.

Suddenly May burst into ecstatic laughter.

Mr. Allen, who was about to drink, stared at her, tumbler in hand.

As the transport subsided, he set down his glass.

"An' wot 'ave I said," he demanded, "that you fin' so 'ighly divertin'?"

"Oh, nothin'," said May, looking to the cornice, as

"Ann started violently at the tense, staring open-mouthed into the sergent's eyes."



though for help to fight her mirth. "I was only laughin' at me thoughts." She hesitated. Then, "I 'appened to pass the

same remarks this afternoon—an' got ticked off for them."

Uncle Tom shifted in his chair.

"Was he your friend, lady?"

"You said your granpa was a common man," he said uneasily. "You said——"

"I said 'e wasn't a nurl," retorted May. "An' you said it wasn' for me to speak disrespect'ful of ur's 'cause I wasn' a lady born, an' you'd rather 'ave the opinion of a nurl's daughter than your own's any day."

Before Uncle Tom could focus this perversion sufficiently to discern the lie upon which a distasteful knowledge of his first-born told him it was depending—

"A nurl's daughter?" said Mr. Allen, glaring at Ann.

"Oh, that's all over," said Aunt Harriet nervously. "She's one of us now. After all, burf's an acciden'."

"Oh, she's one of us, of course," said May. She laughed spitefully. "I'm sure it's a privilege—the way she shares our food an' gentlemen friends." Her voice began to quiver.

"An' I'm sure she'd 've brought 'er Rolls-Royce coopy down—if she'd 'appened to think of it."

Mr. Allen's forehead and cheeks approached the colour of his nose. He began to breathe stertorously.

"Rolls-Royce?" he said hoarsely. He pointed a shaking finger. Instinctively Ann





recoiled. "She 'as a Rolls-Royce? An' I've been breakin' bread at the same table wiv one ooze fathers 'as graoun' the pore to 'eap up riches?" He threw himself forward. "Where's yer Rolls-Royce come from? Aout of the pennies earned by toilin' slaves. Aout of—"

"'Ere, shut yer face," said Bob, rising. "Wot d'you know about it? Jus' 'cause she's a lady—"

Mr. Allen started to his feet

"Wot do I know?" he repeated, with blazing eyes. "I know the terruth. That's wot I know. I say 'er wealth 'as bin stole aout o' the maouths of starvin' baibes. The widdar an' the orphin 'as bin robbed to—"

"An' I say you're a liar," roared Bob.

Ada began to cry, and Aunt Harriet laid a hand upon Bob's arm. He shook her off. Everyone was on their feet. Uncle Tom was at Allen's shoulder. Trembling in every limb, Ann clung to the back of her chair.

Bob continued furiously.

"She never robbed nor stole in all 'er life. Nor 'er father before 'er. It's easy enough for those as don' want to work to 'oller an' carry on 'cause there's dukes an' earls ooze fathers 've made good an' saved, instead o' blindin' their money at the nearest pub."

Mr. Allen surged forward, blaring.

"I'm a liar, am I?" he mouthed. "Jus' 'cause I'm not afraid to strip the troof? She never stole, nor 'er father? P'r'aps not. You wouldn' 'ave no call to steal if your gran'father 'd bin a thief . . . an' murdered an' stole an' saved so as she could 'ave a Rolls-Royce to 'ide 'er nakedness."

Bob hit him on the mouth. . . .

Uncle Tom was between them—shouting. He had Mr. Allen round the waist. The two were lurching and struggling violently. Mr. Allen was cursing in a thick guttural. Blood was welling from his lip. Black in the face with rage, Bob was labouring fiercely to shake himself free. Ann, frantic, was hanging on his arm, beseeching him to come away. Aunt Harriet, who had been something of an expert and knew that dead weight told, lay upon his breast with her arms round his neck. Ada, whimpering, had him by the coat.

Finger to lip, May watched the affray with gleaming eyes. Remembering her husband's prowess as an indifferent heavy-weight, Mrs. Allen regarded Ann with a supercilious stare.

"Get 'im away!" yelled Uncle Tom. "Out o' the room—upstairs! Now then,

Joe. Don' lose yer dignity. 'E'll be sorry to-morrer."

"'E'll be sorry ternight," howled Mr. Allen. "You saw 'im strike me. You saw—"

"Yes, I saw," shouted Uncle Tom. "But, you know, you arst fer trouble, Joe. You 'adn't got no call to make it personal. Never min'. You siddown an' 'ave a drink." He screwed his head round. "Will you get 'im away?" he raved. "I ain't a 'Ercules."

"Oh, Bob, Bob!" wailed Ann. "Bob, for God's sake come away. Surely, if I don't mind, whyever should you? What does it matter? We know it isn't true. Bob, if you love me, leave him and come away."

Bob never heard her.

"'E's insulted my wife," he raged. "You 'eard 'im. That dirty red-nosed skunk 'as laid 'is tongue to my girl. Lemme go, Aunt 'Arriet. I tell you, it's me or 'im. An—"

Ann's voice rang out.

"D'you want to kill me? D'you want me to die of shame?"

Her husband stopped struggling and turned.

"Look 'ere, kid," he expostulated. "You can't expec' me to sit still an' 'ear—"

"You haven't. You've hit him on the mouth. And I say that's enough—I say so."

The pronoun stood up above the uproar.

Uncle Tom started: an oath Mr. Allen was savaging died on his lips. Aunt Harriet released her nephew and stood up, staring.

Ann continued steadily.

"Are you going to question my right?"

Bob's eyes fell.

"Of course," he said clumsily, "of course, if you like to—"

"I do. I want to go. It's my wish. I want you to take me away—out of the house—now. Come, please."

"Out of the 'ouse?" said Bob.

"Out of the house," said Ann. "And—at once. Come."

She turned to the door.

No one said anything at all. The quiet, cold air of one having authority tied up their tongues. They felt suddenly diminished. A wave of detestable respect had swept them off their feet. Blood had told.

Without turning, Ann passed out.

Bob followed his wife, crestfallen enough. . . .

There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"Dear me," said Aunt Harriet, trembling

with rage and mortification. "Might be a crowned queen. 'Take me away—out of the 'aouse—naow . . .'"

She laughed hysterically.

"Woddid I say?" cried Mr. Allen, smearing the blood from his lip. "Dirt. That's wot we are—dirt. Dirt for 'er to shake orf 'er gilded feet. Wot if we 'ave——"

"Yes, I notice you didn't say that when she was 'ere," snapped Aunt Harriet. "Very quiet you was. Anyone might 've thought you was frightened."

"Frightened?" screamed Mr. Allen. "Gimme my 'at. I'll show yer whether I'm frightened."

With a filthy oath, he flung Uncle Tom aside, clapped his hat upon his head and lunged to the door. . . .

They heard him ricochet down the passage and bawl up the area steps.

"Naow you've done it, 'Arriet," breathed Uncle Tom.

Bob heard him bawl, too, and stopped in his tracks. He was on the pavement perhaps two houses away.

Ann heard the challenge, too, and lost her nerve.

She caught at Bob's arm and tried to pull him along.

"Come on, Bob! Come along. Don't take any notice of him." Bob resisting, she tried to drag him with her. "For God's sake, Bob . . ."

Before the terror in her voice the last vestige of her authority collapsed. She became again the weaker vessel, meet to be protected—and avenged.

Bob shook her off and turned.

She flung herself upon him, but he tore her hands away.

She reeled against the railings, shaken and fainting. . . .

She saw the two men meet and heard the smack of a blow. They parted—then drew together again, assuming grotesque postures like animals about to spring. Again they closed for an instant, ducking and slamming like madmen. Broken spurts of cursing were jerked to her ears. . . .

They were in the road now—immediately opposite 'Pier View.' A street-lamp showed her the blood on Allen's face. His mouth was smothered. . . .

Figures began to rise out of the shadows. The light of the lamp was illuminating some of their heads. Somebody panted past her

hotfoot. A little bunch was crammed in the area gate—Aunt Harriet and . . .

Bob seemed to lift himself up. Then he fell headlong backwards, towards the pavement. His shoulders reached the gutter, and his head just made the kerb. This brought his face forward, with a click. For a moment he lay as he had fallen—as one who wishes to remain recumbent and yet, ridiculously, to regard his feet. Then his head slid slowly sideways. . . .

As the crowd surged up, Ann stumbled forward and fell on her knees beside the corpse. Then she asked for water and began to loosen its tie.

People were nudging each other. She knew it. She could feel their curious stares and the awkwardness of the hush that fell wherever she went. She did not care at all. This was quite different. Bob had need of her. . . . Bob . . .

Two police came hastening. One was a sergeant. The crowd fell back respectfully.

The sergeant fell upon one knee and flashed his lantern on the dead man's face.

"Who done this?" he cried, looking up.

Again the crowd parted to reveal Joe Allen holding on to the railings with his coat-sleeve across his eyes.

The sergeant addressed his subordinate.

"Take 'im," he said shortly.

He drew a whistle and blew five or six short blasts. Then he turned to Ann.

"Was he your friend, lady?"

Ann started violently at the tense, staring open-mouthed into the sergeant's eyes. Then she caught the groom's head and peered at the quiet face. For a moment she held it between her palms; then very gently she suffered it to roll back into its old position. . . .

Ann sank back on her heels and stared at the sky.

Slowly the Morland took shape—the spreading oak and the cottage and the jolly brown horse . . . the girl standing in the doorway, holding the little boy . . . and the man on the horse, smiling . . . all alone and happy—under the spreading oak . . . very poor and simple, but very, very happy. . . .

A dry sob shook Ann—the first of many.

Presently the tears began to stream down her cheeks.

She continued to stare steadfastly up into the sky, till the bystanders followed her gaze and tried to see something.

*Another complete story by Dornford Yates will appear in the next number.*

# THE TRAINING OF HORSES FOR THE MOUNTED POLICE

DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED BY

MEREDITH FRADD

*Photographs Copyright by James's Press Agency*

THE question of the best methods for dealing with London's traffic is one that is being hourly tackled by the keenest brains in the Metropolitan Police Force, and there is something curious

this idea of traffic control by mounted men. It is interesting to note that the lessons learnt in France when, as officer in charge of the traffic control on an army front, Colonel Laurie instituted a chain of mounted



THREE OF THE FAMOUS GREYS BEING GIVEN A FEED AFTER A FLAG-WAVING TEST.

in the fact that as the mechanical traffic increases—the motor char-à-bancs at the Derby last year were exactly double the number of those present the year before—so it is proved that police mounted upon well-trained horses are of particular service in dealing with the problem. To Colonel Percy Laurie, C.B.E., D.S.O., Assistant Commissioner and Chief of the Mounted Section of the Metropolitan Police, is due

men down the centre of the roads, so dividing them and keeping them passable for the moving armies, form the basis upon which the mounted police are now working. To a spectator it is especially noticeable how the presence of a mounted man is at once observed and acts as a deterrent to those intending to commit a breach of the regulations.

The efficiency, courtesy, and *sang-froid* of



COLONEL LAURIE FIRING A PISTOL AT CLOSE QUARTERS TO REPRESENT THE BACK-FIRE OF A MOTOR.

the Metropolitan Police officers are world-famous, and it is the purpose of this article to describe the methods adopted to supply the mounted men with horses so perfectly trained as to be worthy of the men who ride them and of the Force of which they are so important a part.

Before a police horse is seen "on duty" it has to pass three severe tests, and perhaps the very first is the most exacting, for Colonel Laurie, who is admitted to be one

of the keenest horse judges in the United Kingdom, personally inspects and rides every horse offered him before it is sent down to Imber Court, Surrey (headquarters of the Mounted Section), for preliminary tests. Satisfied that the animal may possibly shape well, Colonel Laurie has the horse under the hourly critical care of his experts at Imber Court for at least a fortnight. Then, if the report is favourable, the horse is sent to the Royal Veterinary College at



A FLAG-WAVING TEST FOR RECRUITS.

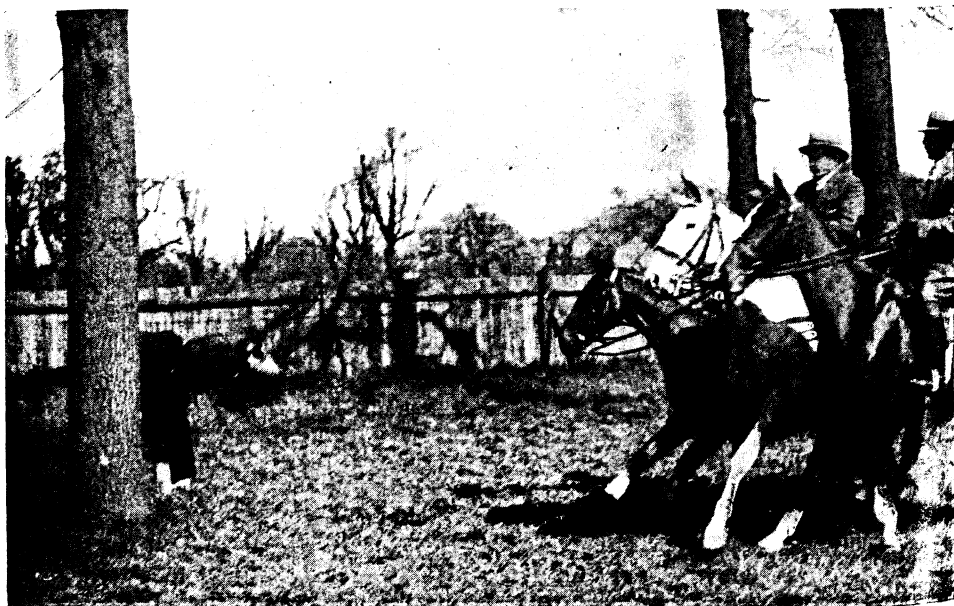


TESTING THE EFFECT OF THE OPENING OF DOORS AND A SUDDEN APPEARANCE.

Camden Town, and if it obtains a first-class certificate signed by two of the foremost veterinary surgeons practising there, it is bought and returns to Imber Court for its intensive training.

To one who, like the writer, has spent some most interesting and instructive hours at Imber Court, one fact stands boldly out in the training of these beautiful animals, and that is Colonel Laurie's insistence upon the work being carried out under his slogan

"Make a fuss of 'em." After each—in many instances terrifying—test, Colonel Laurie instructs his men to make a fuss of the animal they are riding, and in this way slowly but surely the horse is taught that it has nothing to fear. This point is illustrated in a photograph which here shows some of the famous greys (which acted as escort to the Duchess of York on her way to Westminster to be married) being given a feed after a flag-waving test. In the



A DUMMY SHOOTING SUDDENLY FORWARD IN FRONT OF PASSING HORSES.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPLETE INDIFFERENCE TO BAND MUSIC.

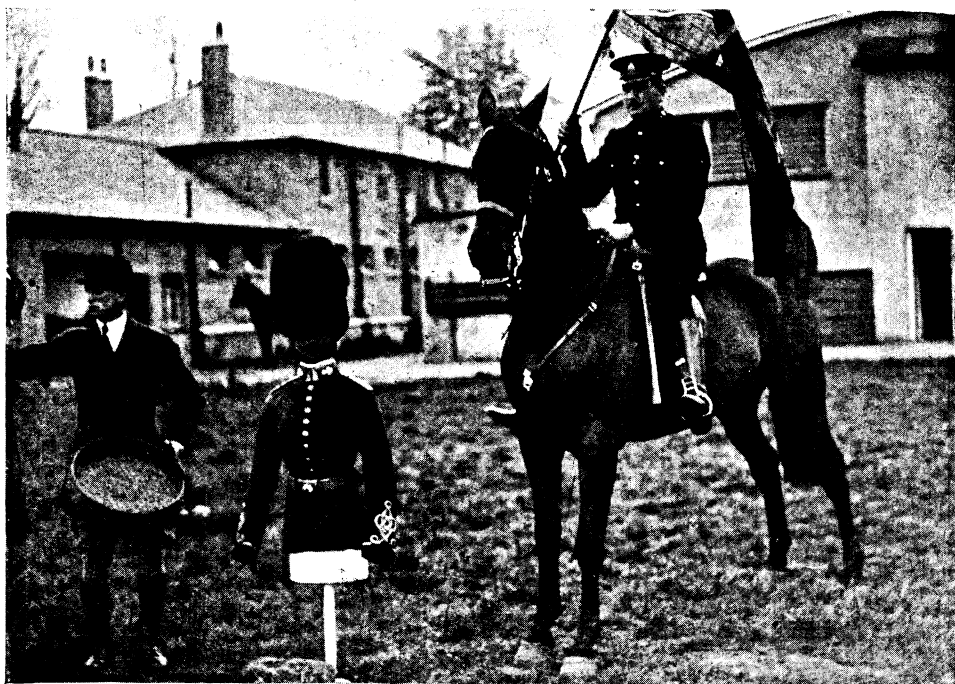
second illustration Colonel Laurie is shown firing a pistol at very close quarters, which is intended to represent a back-fire of a motor, and it will be noted that while the animals are on the alert, the majority are standing rock firm. The same remark applies to the next photograph, in which Colonel Laurie is seen giving some recruits a flag-waving test. The next two illustrations depict the most trying tests invented by Colonel Laurie in his desire to accustom the horses to every type of surprise. In one case Colonel Laurie suddenly darts out from closed doors, and in the other a "dummy" shoots forward in front of passing horses. Before the horses are sent out in the streets of London they have to pass these and all other tests without any sign of distress. The fact that their duties are so often concerned with functions where

bands are playing necessitates a complete indifference to drums and bugles, and the ensuing photograph shows how this indifference is instilled. Many a horse becomes restive if standing beside a running motor; not so the police horse, and his quietude is secured by a test. Not only is the engine of the motor "racing," but cans are thrown out on the ground in front of the horses. There are occasions



LEARNING TO WALK WARILY AND STEP OVER OBSTACLES.





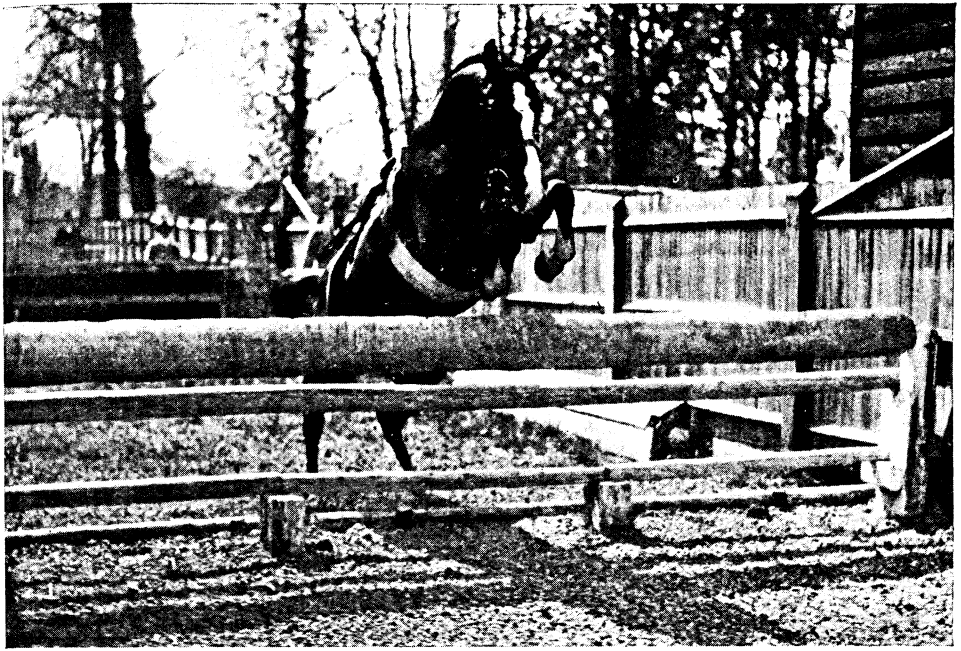
ACCUSTOMING A HORSE TO A MILITARY UNIFORM AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO THE WAVING OF A BIG FLAG.

when a horse may be in a dense crowd, and it is essential that he should be taught to be "dog quiet" and to walk warily and step over obstacles. To accustom the horses to

the military, a dummy is used, and in our photograph of this test a horse is shown standing quiet by a "soldier," while the officer on his back is waving a big flag



PRACTISING THE ART OF BACKING ON TO A CROWD OF WHICH THE FIRST ROW IS REPRESENTED BY DUMMY FIGURES.



JUMPING PRACTICE WITHOUT RIDER.

over his head. In dealing with big London crowds, "nose work" is the first process, and the horse's head is brought up to the people and he quietly pushes them back, almost playfully, instilled, it would seem, with his rider's wish not to hurt—an instance of the complete understanding between rider and horse as the result of the careful training at Imber Court. There are times, however, when more stringent methods are necessary, and for adaptability to such occasions the horse is backed against a row of dummies used for this part of the training. In addition they are trained, to a truly remarkable degree, to face fire and dense smoke, to pass through running water, and to walk up and down stone steps. Jumping is, of course, a very important part of the

training, and the horses are taught both with and without riders. Suppleness in men and horses is secured by riding between posts, which represent people, as shown in another illustration.

Over and above the tests illustrated there is the "pandemonium den" training, if Colonel Laurie will allow me so to designate



A JUMPING LESSON WITH RIDER.



it. In a big building hung in such profusion that the roof is hidden with every conceivable type of flag and bunting, which flutters at will by the pulling of a cord, the horses are ridden, and then rattles are rattled, pistols are fired, lusty-throated men give forth yells that put Indian war-cries and cowboy joy-yells in the shade, and through it all the perfectly-trained horse executes numerous evolutions as if silence reigned supreme. Such, then, are some of the tests that go to make up the training of a troop of horses unbeaten and unbeatable the world over for the particular work in which they are engaged. And now a

the officer came trotting along, and compelled a slow-moving horse-drawn van to get into the kerb, securing an immediate cessation of the congestion. My friend's query was thus answered, for these men on horseback can see far ahead in a way impossible to the foot policeman, and, as in France, so in London, they are able to remove the obstacles to progress. Again, members of the light-fingered brigade have more than once regretted the "full view" obtained by the mounted man of their activities. In such cases the officer dismounts and arrests in the ordinary way, for his horse will remain perfectly still wherever he is



BECOMING ACCUSTOMED TO SMOKE AND FIRE.

word as to the duties which come within the scope of man and horse.

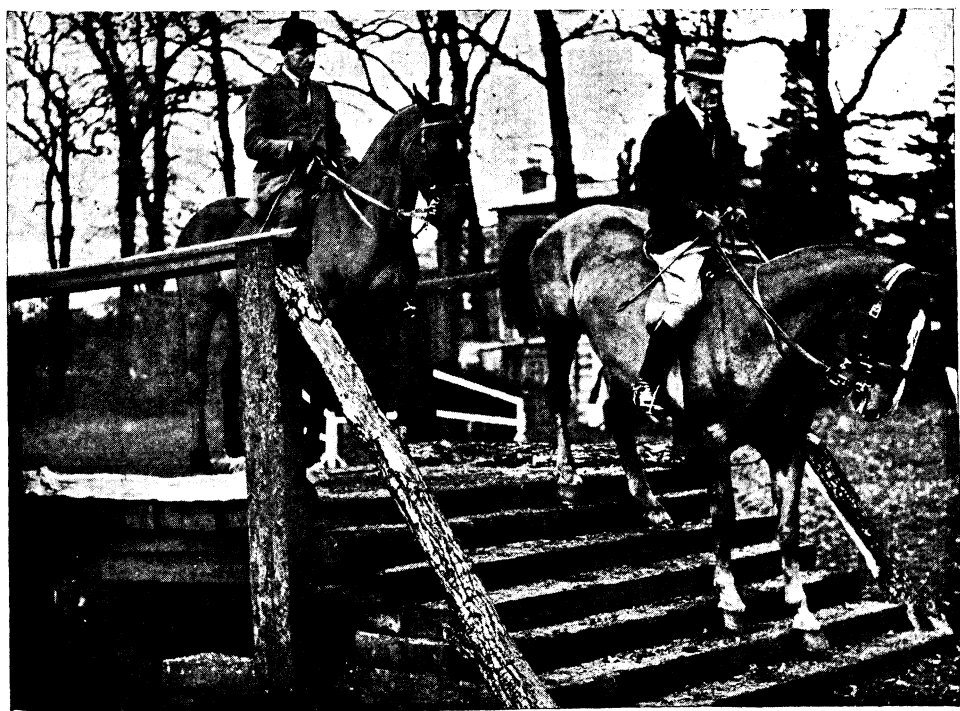
Within the last year or two mounted police have been on duty daily in all the most important London thoroughfares. Sometimes they are seen patrolling the roadway, at others standing rock still, and in this connection the writer had an interesting experience recently, when passing through Oxford Street on a 'bus. Seeing one of these mounted men standing still half-way down the road, a friend remarked: "I can't see the use of these men; they never seem to do anything." Within a few minutes there was a jam in the traffic, and

left, no matter what occurs around him. The mounted police in Rotten Row, Hyde Park, are famous for the lives they have saved and the accidents they have averted. P.C. Andrews, for instance, has received three awards within six months for gallantry in chasing and stopping runaways. In one case he captured a pair of runaway Army horses attached to a limber. The story of P.C. Scorey and his white horse at the Wembley Football Cup Final is another recent example of the efficacy of a mounted man on a horse under perfect control.

The amount allowed by the authorities



TURNING IN AND OUT BETWEEN POSTS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN TO REPRESENT PEOPLE, TO SECURE SUPPLENESS IN TURNING.



TRAINING FOR WALKING UP AND DOWN STEPS.

for the purchase of horses is £70 each, but Colonel Laurie finds that he can obtain animals to suit his purpose at a figure nearer £50, while, on the other hand, he has sold a few to other police authorities at a very much higher figure. That the Colonel is an expert horseman himself goes without saying, and he rides a beautiful grey charger, "Quicksilver," which was his mount in the War and wears all the war ribbons.

And even as in the War it was found that the cavalry still held its proud place as a most important factor in preparing the way for the infantry, so in dealing with the ever-increasing problem of London's traffic it has been proved beyond question that the mounted police officer is essential in tackling a big crowd, making a wedge like a snow-plough behind which the foot police can follow. From his high position he can see and often remove the cause of traffic congestion; for it must be plain to the man in the street that if officers were mounted on motor-cycles for traffic regulation, they would only be jammed with the rest of the traffic.

No quieter animal lives than the horses of the Metropolitan Police Force, and at the touch of their riders they will gently "elbow" a crowd back; but where there is rough work to be done, it is found by those who create trouble that the policeman's horse is as courageous as a cavalry charger



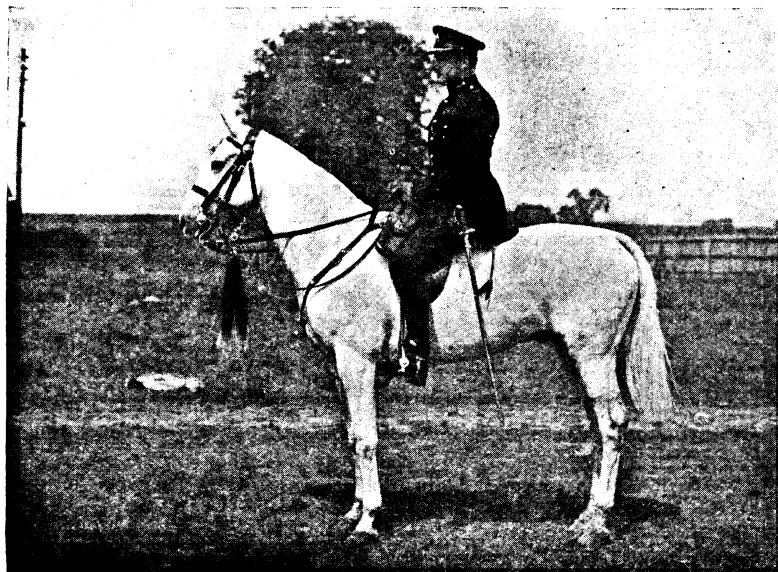
P.C. ANDREWS,

*Who has received three awards within six months for pursuing and stopping runaway horses in Hyde Park.*

going into action, and there is nothing that

he will not face at the bidding of his rider. Recently Colonel Laurie has introduced a new bit, which, while being quite effective, does not punish the horses' mouths.

These horses are every bit as good as they look; the large and varied collection of rosettes and ribbons they have won at horse shows goes to prove this, and the recent Marathon at Richmond, over a course of twelve miles, was covered in the



COLONEL PERCY LAURIE, C.B.E., D.S.O.,

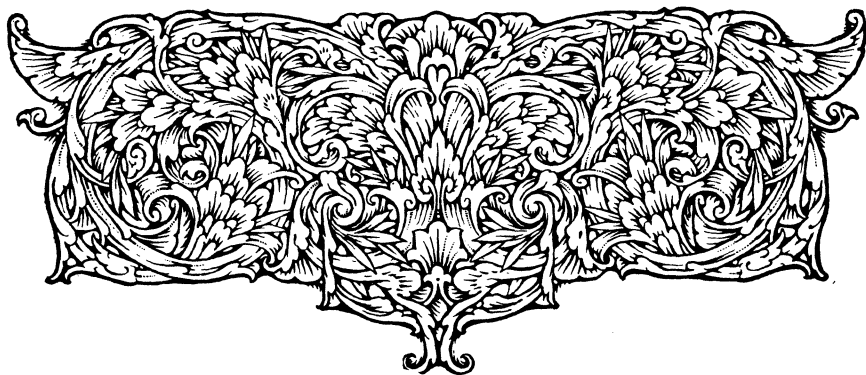
*Assistant Commissioner and Chief of the Mounted Section of the Metropolitan Police.*

meritorious time of thirty-eight minutes, not a single sore back or lame leg resulting the next morning. The horses have to be hard and fit, as they are liable to be called upon at the shortest of notice.

Race meetings, football matches, mass meetings, Boat Race Day, ceremonial occasions and escort duties (the judges still retain their police escort in driving from the Law Courts to Westminster), make large demands on the mounted men. "Efficiency" is their motto—efficiency is what they give. Colonel Laurie has often been heard to remark that his men are so splendid it is easy to run a good show, but those behind the scenes know full well that such perfection requires much careful

work, organisation, and thought, and to Inspector Butt, officer-in-charge at Imber Court, is due all praise for a perfect organisation. It is a byword that the Colonel thinks the world of his men, and because of this, and his trust in them, they give him of their best. The standard and efficiency of the horses is maintained by every one of them attending at Imber Court annually for two weeks to undergo an intensive refresher course.

Taxpayers may rest assured that the portion of Police Rate allocated to the upkeep of the mounted section is well spent in being used to provide a home force of protection unsurpassed in any other police force in the world.



## PETER PAN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.

**T**HE Park is changing with the changing Spring;  
 The crocuses are over, white and gold  
 And purple heads lie rain-bruised on the mould;  
 Now in the lengthening twilight thrushes sing.  
 By dappled, wind-flecked water, sunlight spun,  
 'Midst daffodil and scilla-spangled grass,  
 Here, beckoning the children as they pass,  
 Stands Peter, lithe and laughing in the sun.  
 The elm trees spread their gnarled and blackened roots,  
 And rear their rain-soaked branches to the sky,  
 Bedecked with golden buds and tender shoots;  
 And Peter sees the white clouds chasing by;  
 He sees the children pass, and understands,  
 And feels the Spring rain washing through his hands.

MARIAN ALLEN.

# JULIA

By EDWARD BUCKNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM HATHERELL

**T**HE *Wendlebury News and Shadstock, Norton and Beriton Advertiser* comes out on Fridays, but does not reach outposts of civilisation like Norton Fitzurse till the Saturday morning. Of all Norton, however, I get mine first, because Gomer—in whose mysterious balance-sheet its distribution represents almost the only regular item of income—has his breakfast on Saturdays in my kitchen. Therefore I always find it on my table at breakfast-time; and I always turn to it first, for in the country there is nothing like a country newspaper to put one in harmony with one's environment for the day.

On the particular Saturday morning of which I am thinking, I came into the dining-room with a mind unusually serene, recognised the familiar, smudgy heading with pleasure, and sat down, at peace with the world, to mental and physical refreshment. For some little time nothing out of the ordinary met my eye. I discovered, with something of a shock, that cub hunting was already upon us—"Friday, Greencombe Gate, 7.30"; noted a Successful Entertainment at Kington Magna, when an enjoyable evening was spent by all and sundry; and ran my eye over a belated Sunday School Treat at Shadstock, where the proceedings had terminated with the National Anthem, Mr. J. Pitts (choir-master) presiding at the harmonium. It was not until I had reached the Petty Sessions, and turned the page to discover what Defendant (drunk and disorderly in Wendlebury High Street) had replied, when P.C. Chaffey advised him to go home, that my glance, distracted momentarily by the marmalade, fell upon the Forthcoming Sales.

To one unconnected with farming, the Forthcoming Sales usually afford only the mildest of interest, but here, at the very top of the column, was an announcement that was not only a complete surprise, but a catastrophe. "NORTHEND FARM, NORTON FITZURSE," it began. "*By order of the*

*Outgoing Tenant.* All the Capital Household Furniture, comprising—" But though my eyes mechanically followed the printed lines, carrying to my brain some vague impression of bamboo occasional tables and first-rate feather beds, my attention was far away on the train of thought suggested by the opening words.

*By order of the Outgoing Tenant.* So this was the end of twenty years of self-sacrifice and devotion!

Of all the neighbours whose strength of character had impressed me during my life at Norton, and they were not few, none had won from me such admiration as Julia Hethcott, ruling spirit and, since her father's death, tenant of Northend Farm. I cast back in my mind to my first acquaintance with her.

It was a long time ago now, soon after I first came to Norton, at a social evening which the Vicar had, with some difficulty, persuaded me to attend. It was rather an ordeal for a comparative stranger, especially for one who, like myself, had been forced by circumstances into a town life for many years, and was still casting about to find his feet again in the country; but I had occasion afterwards to thank that evening for giving me a footing among our polite but reserved folk which it would otherwise have cost me years to achieve.

I was led up to partner after partner, all gifted with an uncanny proficiency in dances unknown to the circles in which I had hitherto disported myself, and they all wore black skirts and coloured blouses, and some had sashes to match their skirts, and some to match their blouses; and I remember wondering, in a bemused sort of way, which was this year's fashion and which last year's. And at last, after what seemed centuries of genteel conversation and intense preoccupation about my feet, I was led up to yet another partner; and when I had had time to take her in, I discovered that she was totally and in every respect different from all the others.

To begin with, she had neither a pink blouse, nor a blue blouse, but a very simple black dress, which set off in a striking way the pleasant gravity of her face. It was not that she was beautiful, or even remarkably good-looking, but her whole personality radiated a serene self-possession that was a veritable haven of rest after the arduous and endurances of my previous partnerships. She danced admirably, and her conversation, like the rest of her, was full of character and capability. In the ten minutes I was with her we touched lightly upon root-crops, labour and modern education. On this last subject she had very clearly defined views. "'Tisn't algebra and botany 'd help a person to keep on," she said; "'tis kindness and understanding we poor mortals be in need of."

When I had resigned her to her next partner, I sought out the Vicar's wife—this was the year before she died—and asked urgently for explanations.

"Oh," she said, "you mean Julia Hethcott. Yes, she's something very near a saint."

I said that I thought some saints would have been the better for her common-sense.

"Yes, poor thing," said Mrs. Dacre, "she's a most capable young woman—she's had to be." And she proceeded to give me particulars which amply supported her statement. The black dress, it appeared, was for her mother, who had died, after being many years bed-ridden, twelve months before. Ever since early girlhood Julia had had her hands full of household affairs, to which, latterly, had been added the management of a father who was never amiable, except in a particular and transient stage of intoxication, and was at other times morose at the best, and devilish at the worst—exactly how devilish on Saturday nights, when his old pony brought him home at midnight and shot him off into the porch with the accuracy of long habit, only Julia knew, and she never said a word. But it was Julia who got him to bed week by week, Julia who unsaddled the old pony, and Julia who increasingly, as time went on, planned and managed to save the household from irretrievable ruin.

I ventured the opinion that she would make a magnificent farmer's wife some day.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Dacre, with a sigh. "There was a young man at one time, but Julia wouldn't desert her parents, and old Hethcott made things intolerable up at

Northend, so nothing came of it, and he left the neighbourhood."

Such was my introduction to Julia Hethcott, and time only increased my admiration for her. Not that one saw much of her; she had more and more to take over the direction of affairs at Northend, which is two longish miles from Norton, and before long her only link with the place was the Sunday School, to which she clung under Heaven knows what difficulties, lavishing there on the children of others those treasures of "kindness and understanding" that summed up her ideal of education.

A hard life she had of it with her father, whose tendencies strengthened with old age, and a farm which had never been a good one, though her family had held it for four generations.

"Only famine prices could ever make it pay," said the Squire, when I asked him about it. "Old Hethcott's grandfather made something of it, but Free Trade knocked it clean out, and they've been living on capital ever since. Nobody but that girl could have hung on so long. She's a good 'un, if ever there was!"

After that, I took to walking over to Northend once a month, or thereabouts, at times when I knew her father would be out of the way. She always received me hospitably, and seemed glad enough of any event to break the monotony, but resolutely refused to discuss her own affairs, gently turning the conversation into other channels, if ever I approached them. Rumour said that the old man got worse and worse, and once there was an accident with a gun which cost Julia a finger, and roused a storm of indignation in Norton; but her quiet determination to dismiss the subject, and respect for her wishes, prevented anything coming of it, though at the time an expedition to "break the wold mummock's neck vur un" was freely canvassed in the town.

Then came the War, and for the first time in her life Julia began to make ends meet, and even to lay by in a small way. But prosperity was too much for the old man, and he finished himself off soon after the Armistice, leaving his daughter, now nearing forty, to make what she could of the situation.

Several of us tried to persuade her to give up the farm and invest her savings in something more productive; but her mind was made up. She would stick to the home of her race as long as she could keep

things going. Besides, there were the farmhands to think of. If she went, it would almost certainly fall back into pasture again, and that meant unemployment for men who had served her and hers faithfully all their lives.

So there she had stayed, living alone with one old servant at Northend, getting, each year, a little greyer about the temples, but as full of quiet purpose as ever, and, they said, fonder than ever of other people's children.

And now "*By order of the Outgoing Tenant.*"

## II.

I PASSED a restless morning; tried to work, and gave it up in despair; tried to read, and failed to concentrate my attention, and at last, after lunch, called up my aged spaniel and set out for Northend.

It was one of those still, golden afternoons that come, sooner or later, towards the end of every summer, and suit the genius of the English countryside so perfectly; but to-day my thoughts were out of tune with Nature, and the brilliant weather only seemed a cynical commentary on her rule of tooth and claw. So I stumped along moodily enough, out of the town and up Honeypot Hill, with no eyes for the glorious panorama towards Wendlebury.

Suddenly I heard voices ahead of me round the corner of the lane, and, rounding the bend, came plump upon the Squire's two grandchildren, Ben and Betty, in the donkey-cart and the height of an altercation, in which Gomer was taking an animated part, while the donkey philosophically seized the opportunity for a slight repast. I had been walking on the grass, so that they had not heard my approach, and I was able to observe, unperceived, that the cart contained the necessary equipment for a picnic, and that Gomer had mounted his tallest collar, which is his habit when conducting expeditions of this nature. Behind the group the tottering signpost, where the lane branches off to Northend, supplied a clue to the subject in dispute.

As I halted, Gomer was addressing himself in his most seductive tones to Betty, who regarded him coldly and quite unmoved. She is already more queenly at the age of six than most people are at sixty—what she will be at that age I can't conceive.

"Do ee now listen to I, Miss Betty," protested Gomer; "me poor veet bean't eal to it. If ee *will* meake I goo up Green-

combe, on arl vowers I must goo, me veet be that dra'ed."

Even this affecting picture failed to influence Betty. "Northend, Northend!" she chanted, accompanying herself on the splashboard with the butt-end of the whip.

"But, Betty," insinuated Ben, who sometimes finds two whole years' seniority of no avail against the privileges of sex, "if we go to Batt's Farm we can get *cream*, and I've got a sixpence what Mr. Dacre gave me."

For one moment Betty wavered; then the instinct of dominion overcame her again, and she was lifting the whip to continue her demonstration, when the dog Dash came into her field of vision, and, looking up, she saw me.

"Oo," she cried, "here's Uncle Max!" (I hold brevet rank with these infants.)

"Uncle Max, I want to go to Northend and see dear Julie, and Gomer and Ben are being silly. Tell them to take me to Northend!" She accompanied this command with a glance from her large blue eyes, which will do prodigious execution in ten years' time.

Simultaneously I was aware that Gomer was contorting his face into all shapes and sizes, in a frenzied attempt to convey to me the paramount importance of frustrating Betty's determination, and I wondered yet again at the delicacy which seems to be inborn in the people of my county.

"As a matter of fact," I said seriously, "I heard something about a most tremendous great bull that had got loose at Northend. I think, if I were you, I should go to Batt's Farm to-day."

Betty's eyes became perfectly round with horror, but her dignity had to be preserved at all costs.

"Oh, well," she said, "poor Gomer's feet are drawed, and—perhaps I'll go to Batt's, after all. Go on, Ben!"

The party moved off, but not before Gomer had favoured me with a wink that spoke volumes. As I plunged into the Northend lane, a quavering shout followed me: "Un-cle Max! . . . Do take care of the bu-u-ll!"

With my heart a little lightened by this encounter, I proceeded up Greencombe Hill, intending to leave the lane at a certain gate where the field path drops down upon Northend. But when I got there, I recognised from afar a back-view which could only belong to old John Dean, Julia Hethcott's oldest and most trusted farm-hand. He was leaning on the gate, giving no sign



of life save the thin stream of smoke which rose slowly from his pipe in the still air, and looking down upon the scene of his life's labours. As I came up he turned towards me a weather-beaten face of the old-fashioned country sort, infinitely patient, furrowed with a thousand wrinkles, scorning this modern foolery of shaving under the chin. We gave each other "Good afternoon," and I paused, filling and lighting my pipe deliberately, in the hope that he would begin to talk. But he fell once more into motionless silence, so I, too, rested my elbows on the gate, and cast about for the best approach to the subject we were both full of.

Below our feet the hillside dropped steeply to Greencombe Bottom, where the watercress beds are, with the farm half-way down the slope, a little to the right, on a sort of plateau. There was no movement down there, no smoke from the twisted chimneys, no sign of human activity about the yard. Opposite to us the other side of the valley rose, green and steep, with the terraced sheep-runs along its flanks, crowned at the summit with a couple of stacks and a stone barn belonging to Batt's Farm. All this I took in leisurely, with a queer feeling of pain. It had been a friendly scene to me for many years now.

Still the old man made no sound, and I glanced at him, wondering what thoughts were revolving in his slow, steadfast mind. Bitter enough they seemed to be, from the quivering of his mouth about the stem of his pipe. At last, "This is bad news, John," I said, "about Miss Julia."

He took his pipe slowly from his mouth. "Ar," he said, "bad news it be."

For a moment I thought he was going to add something more, but after a period of indecision he put his pipe back again, and turned his eyes once more upon the farm. I waited patiently for a while for some further observation, but none came; and I was about to speak myself, when, suddenly turning upon me, the old man began to speak earnestly, almost fiercely.

"Bean't no *carl* vur it, sir," he exclaimed, fixing his faded eyes upon mine and trembling a little with the vehemence of his feelings, "bean't no *carl* vur to goo! . . . Tiddn't no wish o' Squire's. . . 'Bide you heer,' er says, 'till times do better. What's a few pund o' rent heer or theer?' er says. . . True 'tis, vur I heerd un when I were behine stable door. . . But would her? . . . Headstrong ooman, that's

what she be. Aye, an' I told her—I told her out. 'Headstrong,' I says. 'Remember Lot's wife,' I says. . . . So then, when she wouldn't listen to un, Squire tried un another way. 'Tell ee what, then,' er says. 'I'll teake the varm in hand, an' d' you bide heer as my baliff.' She cried a heap then, but nothen would do; goo she would. . . . 'You listen to I,' I says, 'an' not be that headstrong!' . . . Sixty-one year have I worked at Northend, an' allus a Hethcott. . . . Ar, an' well I mind when she were barn. 'Darter!' says Varmer, an' er dropped a word. 'Darters be no good to I!' er says. An' come the time her mothered un like a babe. Everything Miss Julie were; ar, an' mwore than ever were knowed. . . . Squire be to take in hand, then. Sent vur I, er did, afore er rode off. 'Come you, John Dean,' er says, 'an' see vur I, an' us'll not quarl 'bout wages.' 'Ar, sir,' I says, 'that be arl very well, but gie I back Miss Julie.' The old man relapsed into silence, and I saw something shining slide down the furrowed cheek.

"Well," I said, "I don't suppose I shall be able to persuade her to change her mind, but I mean to have a good try." And I got over the gate.

"Ar, you mid try," said John Dean, "but I racken her won't be led *or* druv."

### III.

NORTHEND was, once upon a time, the mansion house of a long extinct family, whose arms, almost effaced by centuries of weather, still moulder over the porch. The marks of past distinction are still clearly to be seen, from the enclosed forecourt, with its pair of ornamental pillars, to the terrace along the west front, where the ivy dislodges every year yet another stone from the carved balustrade. But cabbages and potatoes have ousted the flowers from the pleasance, and the ruts of farm-carts are deep along the terrace. All the same, it is a dignified and a friendly house, protected to the north and east by the hillside, and looking out of its low, mullioned windows right away down the combe to the clean, flowing lines of Long Barrow Down, ten miles away.

But to-day there was something vaguely disquieting about the place. Even from the hill above, the complete absence of movement about the farm had given it an appearance of strangeness, and the nearer I came, the more did this impression of



desolation grow upon me. I told myself that it was only because the men had been paid off by Julia, and, like old John, were unable to settle down to new conditions till their late mistress had departed; but, in spite of all I could do, the atmosphere of brooding tragedy intensified with every

life within its walls had ebbed and flowed in constant change. . . . I pulled myself together, tied up the dog to the railings, went up to the door and knocked. The sound echoed from the stone-paved hall, but nothing stirred. I knocked again, louder. Absolute silence followed. Then,



step, and I found myself quickening my pace, to find Julia and put an end to this ridiculous frame of mind. There was nobody in the yard as I crossed it—no doubt her scruples would have led her to dismiss her old servant when she found she could no longer afford her—nobody on the terrace—but of course she wouldn't have been there—and so I came round to the front of the house.

The iron gate of the forecourt was open, as was the front door, but not a soul was to be seen. The old house stood inscrutable in the mellow sunlight, as it had done any time these four hundred years, while the

with a queer constriction about the heart, I entered the house.

Everything was swept and garnished in readiness for the sale, several of the rooms being dismantled, while in others furniture was stacked from floor to ceiling in methodical piles. It was a curious and affecting thing to see the intimate belongings of four generations thus exposed to public

criticism and the heavy hand of the auctioneer. Much of it was solid, if unlovely, dating, no doubt, from the time when "old Hethcott's grandfather made something of it." There were a few pieces of really beautiful old oak—it seemed an impertinence to inspect them closely—

must she have gathered them together for the sacrifice!

I went into room after room, and room after room was empty, till at last a kind of panic descended upon me, and I had to nerve myself to open doors, and breathed more freely when I found nothing behind



"Julia held a regular court in the churchyard after service."

and there was a sprinkling of Victorian gimcrack, that must have been bought to smarten up the place for Julia's mother, in the days when old Hethcott still had hope in his heart and carried his head high. And mixed up with all these was the lumber that collects about a house in the passage of time—broken clocks, and roasting-jacks, and a stuffed owl in a glass case. A sorry enough collection, and yet every bit of it would have had its associations for Julia. With what feelings

them. It was pure nonsense, as I kept telling myself; but something in the atmosphere of the place communicated itself to me, and I searched every nook and corner, both of house and outbuildings, before I finally gave up the quest and turned towards home. I faced about for one last look at the house before I left it, and to my overstrained senses there seemed something cruel about its placid detachment, as it lay there smiling in the sunshine, keeping its secret.

John Dean had not had enough faith in my powers of persuasion even to wait for my return, so that my only chance of getting any light on the mystery had vanished, and there was nothing for it but to make my way home, which I accordingly did, racking my brains to discover any possible reason which could account for Julia's leaving the house empty and open at such a time as this.

Deep in this preoccupation, I had reached the junction of the lane with that leading to Batt's Farm, when I was effectually roused from my brown study by a series of piercing yells, accompanied by the rattle of hoofs, and before my astounded eyes flashed the donkey-cart, the donkey with his ears back, galloping as though the fiends were after him, while Ben, standing up in the most approved charioteer style, encouraged him with a succession of well-sustained screeches. As they passed the head of the Northend lane, Betty caught sight of me, and I saw her mouth open wide, though nothing was audible above the din of their progress; but Ben immediately began to rein in, a proceeding complicated by the ecstatic barking of Dash, who had never had the chance to hunt this particular donkey before. Ultimately they pulled up some way down the lane, and I captured the dog and obtained something like silence.

Both the children were in a great state of excitement.

"Oo! Uncle Max," began Betty, with eyes like saucers, as soon as she could make herself heard, "we saw Julie in the quarry, an' what *do* you think? She was with a *man*, an' they were ki——"

"Shut up, Betty, you pig!" broke in Ben, going scarlet. "You know we agreed we wouldn't tell people!"

"Uncle Max isn't people," protested Betty.

But suddenly light had come to me. "What!" I shouted.

Ben pressed his hand firmly over his sister's mouth, disregarding her squeals, and said: "Julie asked us would we take a message to grandfather, as quick as ever we could go, and——"

"What was the message?" I interrupted quickly.

"She said, 'Tell Squire I'll bide,'" said Ben.

"Thank God!" said I from the bottom of my heart.

"An' she gave Ben a kiss," said Betty, escaping for a moment.

"*Will* you shut up, Betty?" said Ben, going red again, and thumping her. "What's it all about, Uncle Max?"

"Look here," I said, "you mustn't hang about here gossiping, but I can tell you it's the best bit of news I've heard since I don't know when. Now let's see that donkey of yours gallop again."

\* \* \* \* \*

They were in church together on Sunday, Julia radiant and looking ten years younger, and the young man (we all called him "the young man," though it was twenty years since he had left Norton) wearing the beatified look of one who has achieved his only ambition. And, to crown all, John Dean had been brought to church by his wife, though they are both Methodists of the most uncompromising description, and the joy that shone in their two faces from start to finish added a final lustre to the occasion.

Julia held a regular court in the churchyard after service, while the faithful pair stood in the background with a proprietary air, and the bugles on Mrs. Dean's bonnet clashed continuously in time to her nods and smiles.

"Ar, sir," said old John, button-holing me after I had proffered my congratulations, "us didn't think to see this deay larse evenen, did us, now? Do ee look to they! Rachel an' Jacob, I do carl 'em. Let I see Miss Julie wed, an' the Lard can teake I when He've a mind!"

"Thee bide quiet, John, an' not tark that voolish!" said Mrs. Dean, in high good-humour. "Meake wold bones yet, thee wilt, won't un, sir? Come on wi' ee, now; time to be gotten hwomealong. Miss Julie be gwine!"

And, still beaming, the old couple followed their mistress towards Northend.





# THE WEDDING RING

By GUY RAWLENCE

ILLUSTRATED BY BALLIOL SALMON

**I**MMEDIATELY on her arrival at the Hotel Aurora, Sorrento, Mrs. Newton was the object of either interest or admiration—it depended upon the sex of the onlooker. The women were intrigued by her frocks, the way she did her hair, admitted grudgingly the charm of her manner, her half-shy assurance; the men, avoiding detail, admired her unquestionable beauty. But equally curiosity was aroused. The old ladies, of whatever nationality, conjectured as to whether she might be a widow; certainly she wore no weeds, but,

then, one never knew in these days. Divorced, perhaps—but they hoped not. An estrangement—they hoped not. They tried in every particular to be charitable. The men likewise conjectured, but with more reticence. Their curiosity found outlet in little acts of courtesy—the opening of doors, the restoration of a dropped handkerchief, the proffering of a newspaper. They were rewarded impartially by a smile, but three days elapsed before Mrs. Newton held any conversation with her fellow-guests. Then it was old Miss Field, who, on the pretext

of looking for some notepaper at the table where Mrs. Newton was writing, forced an opening. They had talked during several minutes, when Mr. Fox—the most assiduous profferer of newspapers—approached, thanking Heaven that only that afternoon he had permitted himself to be bored for a full half-hour while Miss Field recounted every fact concerning a visit to Pompeii.

Miss Field contrived the introduction very neatly. "Dear Mr. Fox, I have brought down those postcards. Perhaps you will care to look at them, and, Mrs.——" She turned towards the enchanting person beside her, deliberately disclaiming ignorance of the name and also of the contents of the hotel visitors' book.

"Newton—Mary Newton," said the girl, and, perhaps intentionally, raised her left hand so that the ring on its third finger was visible.

"Oh, yes, thank you. One becomes acquainted with people without any idea of their names, doesn't one? So queer, like many things in foreign travel," purred Miss Field. "And now may I introduce Mr. Fox—the celebrated architect, you know?"

Robert Fox, trying not to look too delighted, bowed. Mrs. Newton, very dazzling in her gown of amber, responded with a smile.

"Not celebrated. Really I can't claim that adjective," he said.

Miss Field appeared disappointed. "But you are so extremely well-informed. I am sure you know quite as much as that professor who lectures in the Forum," she protested. "Did you hear him, Mrs. Newton?"

Mrs. Newton shook her head. "I'm afraid I did very few of the things one ought to do at Rome."

"Of course you saw more of the social side of Rome. A wonderful cosmopolitan society, I'm told. You were staying at the 'Excelsior'?"

"Yes."

"But you will be visiting Pompeii, won't you? So these postcards will interest you."

Miss Field produced her packet, and for twenty minutes Mrs. Newton and Fox feigned an unconvincing interest in Miss Field's comments and ejaculations. A clock striking the hour released them. The little old lady got to her feet and, with many assertions of regret, announced that it was her bedtime. "My doctors are so particular, you know. Ten o'clock precisely, they tell me."

She took her departure. Mrs. Newton was about to follow her example, when Fox, overcoming his inherent diffidence, ventured on a remark.

"It's almost the best time of the day or—or, rather, of the night," he said. "I always have a look from the terrace before turning in. And now there's a moon——"

He glanced at Mrs. Newton, saw that she hesitated, and was emboldened to continue. "And Vesuvius is showing off to-night."

Mrs. Newton hesitated no longer. "How exciting!" she exclaimed. "I must see it—just for a minute."

She turned to Fox, and without further comment they crossed the room, passed through a door and were on the terrace. It was set on the verge of a cliff. Far below them was the dark, placid surface of the sea. Voices came floating upward, and presently a brilliant light shone out from a slowly-moving boat. One could see the forms of men against the glare as they bent forward to spear the dazzled fish. Beyond, the spaces of the bay spread, faintly silver, to where, far away, sparkled the lights of Naples. The moon hung in a serene and unclouded sky. In contrast to the peace of the night was the glow, red and sinister, which hovered about the bulk of Vesuvius.

It was a scene which held something both of mystery and enchantment; the moonlight, the spaces of water, the torch of the smouldering volcano—all these things had their effect, but now that Mr. Fox faced them he turned a deliberate back to the romance and the beauty of the Italian night. He was even inclined to ignore Mrs. Newton's whispered "How wonderful!" She repeated it, not, he felt, to attract his wandering attention, but because the hour had stirred her to a simple yet profound admiration; for in spite of her beauty, her radiant gowns, the way in which she played the rôle that inevitably seemed hers—that of a young, charming and preposterously wealthy woman—a truer quality of her nature was manifest, a quality of naturalness and innocence. It was this, perhaps, which was, for Robert Fox, the reason of her fascination.

"Yes, isn't it?" he assented, and searched in his mind for something to say. Personally he was perfectly content with silence, with the fact that he stood alone with Mrs. Newton in the night.

"You have been here before?" she questioned.

"No, but I shall come again—I feel that," he answered.

"Soon?" The word was spoken idly.

"Directly I become what Miss Field calls celebrated," he replied. "Until then I suppose I shall have to be content with less extravagant holidays."

"I hate to think I shan't see this place again," murmured Mrs. Newton.

"But why shouldn't you?" he asked involuntarily.

"Haven't you just suggested that this sort of holiday is—well, expensive?" she said slowly.

He didn't know what to say, for obviously he could not retaliate with the suggestion that she, who radiated luxury, was the last person to talk of expense.

"In these days one never knows about money," she broke into the silence quickly. "I'm always being reminded of that. My husband——"

She paused, and Fox felt that the word had slipped out unawares. For him it was the ugliest word that he had heard for so long as he could remember. It seemed to annihilate every hope that he had ever cherished.

"He is a pessimist?" he brought himself to say.

"I think he must be," she answered, with a smile. "At least, he used to be."

The tail of the sentence brought Fox to the verge of relief. Surely she referred to the past, surely that meant the unknown, but abominable, Mr. Newton was deceased?

"I'm sorry——" he began.

"But now——"

Once more the unknown gentleman was resurrected. Hope wavered again. It was torturing. Of course the whole thing was absurd, and it was more than absurdity which permitted Fox to allow himself the possibility of falling in love with Mrs. Newton. It was outrageous to contemplate, even presuming Mr. Newton was decently dead, that he, practically penniless, practically unknown, might ever consider Mrs. Newton other than as a passing acquaintance, and yet during these days that he had seen her, worshipping romantically from afar, he had permitted his imagination a certain latitude.

"But now," Mrs. Newton continued, after a maddening pause, "it's right almost to be pessimistic about things, don't you think? Though it's horrible to think what one may have to give up, to be poor, restricted—poor as I was before——"

"Before your marriage?"

"Marriage?" She paused again and

looked at him keenly for a second. Then, "I think it's time to go in," she said. "One gets tired here, somehow, doing nothing, though that is why I came here—just to sit in the sun."

"You had a busy time in Rome?" Fox tried to bring naturalness into his voice.

"I had a glorious time in Rome," she confessed. "I loved it. I suppose one always appreciates things most when you know they have to stop. That's why I never pitied Cinderella. Knowing that midnight must strike soon must have made the ball terribly exciting. . . . Good night."

She held out her hand, smiled, and, before he could speak, turned and crossed the terrace.

Robert Fox remained wondering furiously.

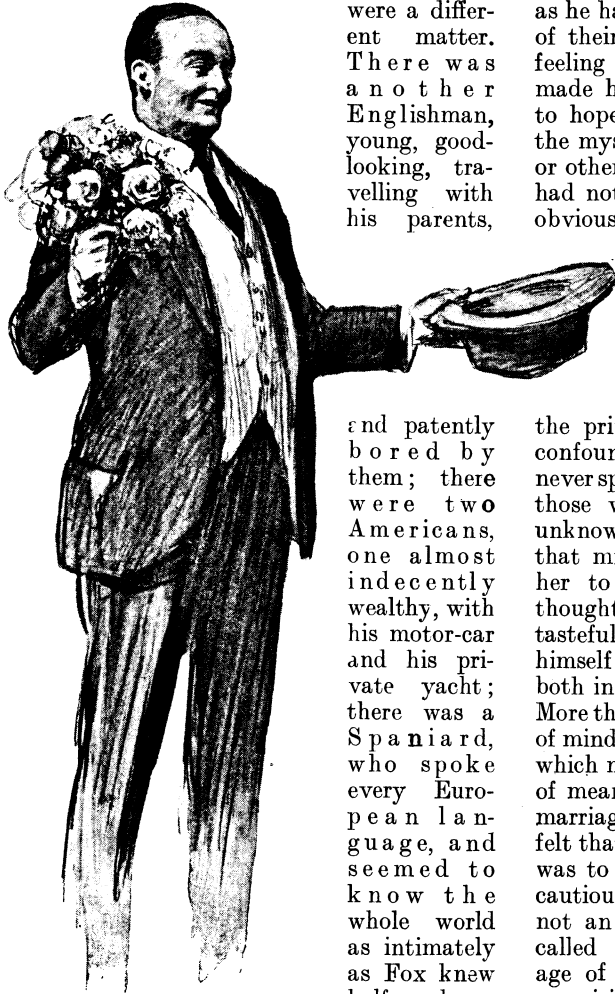
## II.

A WEEK passed. For Fox it was a time both delightful and tantalising—delightful because of the ripening of his friendship with Mrs. Newton, tantalising because he was so horribly aware that friendship was the most that she could offer him. She remained, too, an enigma. Hourly, it may be said, he became more fully a slave to her charm, her grace; but always he was baffled, not merely by the fact of his ignorance of her circumstances, the "secret" which, somehow, he felt that she guarded, but by her nature. She held so much of contradiction. At first he had been prepared to look on her as what is called a woman of the world—that is to say, experienced, wise, discerning; but soon he was forced to alter his opinion, for often Mrs. Newton appeared simple, ingenuous, almost in character the girl she was in years. There was an aloofness, a candour about her which seemed in direct contrast to what she told him of her life, though, it was true, the life which she confided to him was an extremely restricted one, going back no further, indeed, than the months of the past winter, which she had spent at Monte Carlo and Rome. There she had known gaieties innumerable, lived in a whirl of social excitements of which she spoke, sometimes with an air of disillusionment, sometimes with a naive enthusiasm. Of her previous life, of her family, her friends, England, she spoke not at all, of her husband never. And because of this reticence, Fox excused himself for permitting his scruples to be overruled and indulging in what could only be described as a deliberate, if restrained, flirtation.

The fact, too, that he was not alone

in his admiration urged Fox to more pronounced attentions. For following on that first meeting with the enchantress, it appeared Mrs. Newton had become acquainted with half the guests of the Hotel Aurora. Obviously the female members of that little society could be disregarded, but

the males were a different matter. There was another Englishman, young, good-looking, travelling with his parents,



and patently bored by them; there were two Americans, one almost indecently wealthy, with his motor-car and his private yacht; there was a Spaniard, who spoke every European language, and seemed to know the whole world as intimately as Fox knew half a dozen

English counties; and there was some Italian, with a doubtful title and a plausible tongue, who talked with what Mrs. Newton considered a most beguiling accent. Among these admirers Mrs. Newton held her court. Seated in a long chair under a wistaria-hung pergola, she laughed and chatted with an engaging air of enjoyment, an almost child-like satisfaction. She was impartial with her favours, made no difference in her manner towards her courtiers, was equally charming, equally

radiant to one and all. Fox had no possible claim for a preference, and yet on the rare occasions when he was alone with Mrs. Newton, he felt that she treated him differently from the others. Then there was a certain gravity in her mood, an undercurrent of seriousness to her talk, and more than once she had subtly hinted at difficulties, as he had fancied she had done on the night of their first encounter. This gave him a feeling of superiority; it would even have made him hope—had there been anything to hope for, had he known definitely that the mysterious Mr. Newton was either dead or otherwise definitely disposed of—if there had not been the barrier of Mrs. Newton's obvious riches, if—in fact, if the entire situation had been different.

It was only towards the end of the week that Fox was oppressed with doubt. Suddenly it occurred to him that perhaps Mrs. Newton was equally candid, equally grave with her other admirers during

the privacy of a *tête-à-tête*. Perhaps that confounded Spaniard shared with him those never spoken but so often implied confidences, those words which could only allude to unknown but desperate difficulties; perhaps that middle-aged American had persuaded her to tell her secrets. For Fox these thoughts were in the highest degree distasteful. He had always looked upon himself as level-headed, even cautious, both in affairs of the head and of the heart. More than once he had had sufficient strength of mind to cut short deliberately a friendship which might lead to affection, because a lack of means had seemed, in his eyes, to make marriage an impossibility, because he had felt that to ask any woman to share poverty was to demand too much. He had been cautious certainly, and perhaps it was not an exaggeration when his family had called him calculating; but now, at the age of thirty-three, he had suddenly and surprisingly changed. He threw caution to the winds. Obviously he could have nothing to gain, obviously Mrs. Newton was remote from him, yet he was determined that at least he would—he must—arrive at some completer understanding of her difficulties. He might even help her; at least he could play the *rôle* of knight-errant, if not of troubadour.

The decision came to him during the hour of siesta, when the Hotel Aurora seemed dull and tiresome, when even the beauties of Sorrento were insipid because of Mrs.



Newton's withdrawal. It would be four o'clock at earliest before she made a re-appearance, before she came out into the sunlit garden and wandered to her chair

an admirable patience, made easier by the fact that the Americans drove off in their car, that the young Englishman had been inveigled to take his mother for a row, that



"Among these admirers Mrs. Newton held her court."

beneath the pergola. No sooner was the decision arrived at, than Fox took up his position facing the door through which inevitably she must pass. He waited with

the Spaniard had gone to Naples for the day. His way seemed clear.

At last she came. For a moment she paused on the threshold, opening a sunshade.



then advanced towards Fox. At sight of him she nodded.

"You are going to the pergola?" he asked. "Shall I order tea?"

"No, not yet. In fact, I'm not sure that I want tea. One wastes too much time over meals," she said. "And I don't want to waste a second of this afternoon—my last afternoon."

"You mean that you are going away?" Fox gasped.

"Yes, to-morrow."

"But——"

"One can't stay at Sorrento for ever," she exclaimed.

"Then I can't get you any tea?" said Fox absurdly.

"No, really not. But perhaps—I thought that—shall we go for a walk?"

"Of course. I should like nothing better."

She smiled at him frankly. She looked adorable, young and fresh; it was incredible that she was a woman with a secret.

They set off, threaded the narrow streets of the old town in silence, crossed the broad Via Tasso, and so came to the orchards of orange and lemon trees which girdle Sorrento on three sides. Soon the path began to mount upwards. Mrs. Newton paused.

"I'm not lazy—I love walking," she said. "Really, it's not a bit like me to sit about all day in a chair, as I've done here—no more like me than the life I lead at Monte Carlo and Rome—but this afternoon—no, I don't want to walk any further. Let's sit down here."

She pointed to a low wall. "You don't mind?" she suggested, as they took their places. "I'm glad, and I—I want to talk to you."

Fox felt that some tremendous honour had been bestowed upon him. He found it impossible to reply. Ignoring his silence, Mrs. Newton continued.

"I must explain," she said, with a queer diffidence, "why it is I want to talk, why I've chosen you. Everyone has been kind to me here, and I have accepted their kindness without a qualm. With them the pretence didn't seem to matter, but——"

She paused. Her eyes were lowered, and she poked the tip of her sunshade between two stones.

"Pretence? I don't understand," he said awkwardly.

"Perhaps that is too—too drastic a word," she answered quickly. "No, I suppose I

can't tell you everything, but I do want you not to have a wrong impression. I don't want to say good-bye knowing that—oh, it's hopeless!"

"Then you really are going away?"

"Yes, I must. My husband——" Her tongue seemed to trip over the word.

"You mean you are joining him?"

Mrs. Newton shook her head almost emphatically.

"No, I can't do that," she said. "It's not possible. He——"

"You mean he is no longer alive?" Fox felt impelled to put the definite question.

"Exactly. He's not alive," admitted Mrs. Newton.

It was only by an effort of self-control that Fox refrained from expressing an emphatic and altogether indecent satisfaction. Suddenly everything was changed; suddenly he could look on Mrs. Newton with different eyes. Mrs. Newton became intensely real. Before she had seemed unattainable as a vision, aloof as some beautiful but unprocurable picture, only to be admired from afar; now she was human and within reach.

But all he said was, inadequately and absurdly: "I'm sorry."

She turned to him with a little gesture of denial. "You mustn't give me sympathy," she said. "I don't need it—I don't deserve it. You will understand when I tell you. I think—I even hope—that you will be disappointed."

He looked at her in amazement, saw that there were tears in her eyes, that her hand was trembling.

"If I could help, if——"

"You won't want to help," she protested. And then: "I suppose you have wondered about me—everyone does—wondered who I am, just exactly how much money I have."

"No, really——"

"But they all do—all the men I have met. I can almost see them calculating. Horrible! Yet, if I may say it, I don't think you are like that, and that is why I want to explain."

But Fox wasn't listening now. The allusion to money had shattered his scarcely formed dream. Once more she had become unattainable, once more there was an impassable gulf between them.

She saw that his attention had wandered, how he was looking straight before him, apparently heedless of her, apparently absorbed. She bit her lip. She felt that

she had been given a blow. She had wanted so desperately to make her little confession, to gain his sympathy and understanding; she was prepared to humble herself, but now she was dumb. Pride asserted itself. She didn't pause to discover the reason of his abstraction, the motive for his silence, his lack of response; she recoiled immediately.

"I think it is time we went back to the hotel," she said, and got to her feet.

"To the hotel? But I thought that you were going to——" He began anxiously.

"I have changed my mind," she said. "Besides, I have just remembered that the Barone invited me to row out to the Cape. Poor Barone, I mustn't keep him waiting."

"Confound the Barone!" exclaimed Fox. "He can wait."

"Really, Mr. Fox, that is a question for me to decide."

"I beg your pardon, but honestly I don't understand. I don't quite know what to say."

"We will say good-bye," she answered calmly. "I am leaving early to-morrow."

"But we can meet again. We must meet again. I thought—I have valued your friendship——"

"Friendship?" Mrs. Newton's tone was icy.

Fox felt defeated. He seemed to blunder at every word.

She had already made a step forward, when she paused. A look in his eyes made her suddenly contrite, suddenly remorseful, and she realised that she was being a fool, that she was deliberately trampling on something that was offered to her very humbly. She didn't deserve to take it, she told herself; she deserved nothing, and yet, after all——

"Perhaps we may meet in London," she said over her shoulder.

He clutched at the suggestion. "Of course, if you will permit me to call—if I might write," he said.

"Yes, perhaps you may write. It will be easier. And now, really, good-bye," she smiled.

"But where shall I write—the address?"

Very carefully she put on her glove before replying, masking the wedding ring on her hand. "Write to me 'Care of Miss Smith,' 45, Wendover Road, Pimlico," she said.

"Pimlico?" Fox exclaimed.

"Yes. People *do* live in Pimlico, you know," Mrs. Newton murmured, and walked on.

Idiotically Fox made no movement to

follow her. He stood still, watching the white-clad figure passing through the patterned shadows of the orange trees.

### III.

THE first hot days of summer had come. Already the air of London seemed stale and flat; only with evening came a little breeze which, though it refreshed, tantalised rather than satisfied, because it hinted at the unattainable delights of the country, and made one contrast the grey wilderness of streets with the green wilderness of fields and downlands, the reek of petrol and tar with the scent of grass and flowers. This breeze was just stirring as Robert Fox got off the omnibus at Victoria and turned in the direction of Wendover Road. He walked slowly, his mind absorbed in thought. He was almost afraid, for he knew that he was within a few minutes of something final; within a few minutes he might be forced to face the keenest disappointment of his life—if he failed to find this unknown Miss Smith, if she refused all information regarding Mrs. Newton, if he should have to accept the silence which had followed the writing of three letters. For he was only calling at the address which had been given to him as a last and desperate resource.

He turned into Wendover Road and passed quickly along the rows of stucco-faced houses. They were shabby and unpleasing, dismal survivals of a past age, with their absurdly heavy porticos, their stalwart iron railings. Arrived opposite No. 45, he went up the steps and pulled a bell. Presently the door was opened and a girl appeared.

"Does Mrs. Newton live here?" he asked, and as he spoke almost smiled at the preposterous suggestion that the exquisite lady of Sorrento should inhabit one of these forlorn and grimy houses.

"No, we've 'ad no Newtons," said the girl.

She was about to close the door, when Fox made another effort.

"Then her friend, perhaps—a Miss Smith?" he hazarded.

"Oh, 'er. Yes, Miss Smith's 'ere. Will you go up? First floor back. Door at the top of the stairs," said the girl.

She stepped aside, and Fox entered, walked down the narrow passage, climbed the stairs, and knocked on the door which faced him. It seemed one swift action, too quick for him to hesitate, even to wonder

at the strangeness of the path which was leading him to Mrs. Newton.

"Come in!" said a voice. He opened the door and entered a sitting-room. It was small, and the window so masked by the opposing houses that for a moment it seemed unoccupied. Then he distinguished the figure of a woman seated in a low chair with her back to the light.

"Miss Smith?" he said tentatively.

"Yes," was the reply. The figure rose, and amazingly he was confronted by Mrs. Newton.

#### IV.

"Oh, why did you come?" she demanded swiftly. "Couldn't you realise, when I didn't answer your letters, that it was because I didn't *want* you to come?"

For a moment he stood there motionless, too surprised, too bewildered to speak.

"But I don't understand," he said at last. "What does it all mean?"

"You want to know? You want me to explain?" she retorted.

"Yes—of course. Isn't it only fair, after all?"

He saw that she was considering, that she was torn with doubts. He felt tremendously sorry. He hated surprising her secret like this, and yet he could not go away without an answer to the riddle.

"Yes, perhaps it is only fair," she conceded. "You knew, and—I think even you liked that detestable Mrs. Newton."

"I won't pass that," he protested.

"Perhaps it is only right you should be told of her—her death," she continued.

"Her death?"

"She died soon after you saw her at Sorrento—immediately on her return to London. Miss Smith took possession of her body; I hope the rest of her is completely vanished."

"I'm beginning to understand," said Fox slowly.

"Do you want to hear the rest, the history of Miss Smith, or are all your interests bound up in the wealthy, worldly creature Mrs. Newton?"

"I confess I liked her. There was something beneath what you call the worldliness, you know."

"I admit she had pluck, courage of a sort," said the girl musingly. "She did carry it through."

"But I am honestly more interested in Miss Smith. Tell me about her."

The girl moved to the window, stood there staring out at the narrow view. Then she began to speak slowly, deliberately.

"Miss Smith was the daughter of poor but honest parents, and had to work for her living. She was a secretary. She was a secretary for five years. Then an aunt died, leaving her a thousand pounds. Miss Smith was informed that a thousand pounds, properly invested, would mean for her an annual income of fifty pounds. But the idea did not appeal to her. It seemed too cautious a way of using the money. She was ambitious, curious, fearfully curious to know what it was like to be rich, to travel, to be—oh, it's difficult to explain, but the end of it was Miss Smith bought innumerable dresses, hired a maid, borrowed a name and went to Italy. She had a most amusing three months. She had all the satisfaction of knowing that several men admired her, that several women envied her, that—"

The girl by the window stopped with a little choking sound. Fox saw the flutter of a handkerchief in the gloom of the room. Then he took her in his arms

#### V.

"I'm awfully glad I knew Mrs. Newton," said Fox presently. "She was a very charming creature, but an unapproachable one."

"But why?"

"To begin with, she was married."

"She was a widow. She told you that."

"But she was extremely wealthy, not at all the wife for a poor man."

"Are you a poor man?"

"Most decidedly," admitted Fox. And then, anxiously: "Does Miss Smith mind?"

The girl laughed.

"You can't be quite so stupid as to think I should mind," she said. "Miss Smith is accustomed to poverty. She is absurdly impecunious herself. In fact, she can only provide one thing towards setting up house."

"What is that?"

"Oh, Mrs. Newton bequeathed her a wedding ring."





"Sitting there, he threw stones at the thing."

# THE DEBT

By ALAN SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

THE great bowl of sky was a dull baking blue, devoid of substance and depth, that lifted mercilessly over a rock-rimmed depression of the desert, and into this basin there seemed to pour all the savage heat of a noonday sun. The air, marvellously clear, was dancing in swimming, transparent layers above sand and ridge, so that the jagged horizon where earth met sky assumed momentarily strange and fantastic outlines. There was nothing green, but yellow, red, orange and ochre were all painted eternally in this vast loneliness. At times a little wandering wind crossed the basin, picking up small corkscrew columns of sand that swayed grotesquely for a few yards and dissolved like a wisp of steam. Only in the sky itself was there any life, and this when a vulture, coasting through caves of air on ragged and motionless pinions, turned his bright, unsheathed eye on the desolation beneath.

It fell on an evening, about sundown, that two men, mounted on mules, emerged from the mouth of a ravine that opened into the basin and stood for a moment in silent wonder. One was short, thick-set and powerful, with broad sloping shoulders and a bulldog face. The other was taller, more lithe and aquiline, with high cheek-

bones, dark eyes and a suggestion of the North American Indian in his lean features. Both were battered by long travel and tanned a copper brown. A small kit was slung at either saddle. The short man made a sound deep in his hairy throat.

"Well, Yank, you wanted Hell's Hole. Now what do you make of it?"

The other lowered his left eyebrow, which gave him an oddly saturnine expression. "Much the same as parts of Arizony, with a piece of Death Valley in Southern California thrown in."

"Know those parts?"

"Only Arizony. I was herding cattle there when I was drafted. But I seen pictures of Death Valley—same as this. Lose the trail and miss the waterhole, and you're done. What's our next move now?"

The other man did not answer at once. Hell's Hole glimmered up at him, masked in gorgeous and swimming tints. It invited, dared, mocked and taunted, while a breath from the void whispered that somewhere in that maze of orange and yellow there waited a fortune beyond all human dreams. Perhaps death waited, too—if they missed the waterhole. And at that something stirred in his breast.

"We go on," he said grimly; "we can't go back."

They went on, the mules slithering down long slopes of broken shale, on till the moon rose and cast their ghostly shadows on the baking sand. There was no more talk, every instinct in mule and man being intensely alive, searching for water. In three hours they found a tiny pool that held a few gallons at the foot of a great rock. The rock itself was too hot to touch.

The Yank slept that night, but Johnstone lay awake, his mind pitching back to Bideford in Devon, where once, before the War, he was a small farmer. From the farm he could see Lundy's Island when the weather was clear. He wished dumbly that he could see it now, and the green outlines of coast that led westward toward Clovelly. But on the day of the Armistice the Yank had driven all that out of his head with tales of fortune to be had for the taking in New Mexico. So to New Mexico they came. Of late he began to wonder if the Yank knew as much about prospecting as he pretended. It was in the back of Johnstone's head that it took a Cornishman to understand rocks.

They went at it next day, after rolling big stones over the mouth of the pool to keep off the mules, working separately, and taking each what direction he would. The basin was perhaps twenty miles in diameter, a vast, irregularly rimmed saucer into which projected rocky peninsulas amongst rocky islands, the shores of which had been fretted by waves of sand for a million years. Johnstone's eyes were scared and his throat dry before he had been out an hour. The heat jumped at him out of the very ground.

Not far from the pool was a giant cactus, thirty feet high. He kept that in view all day, and once or twice caught the clink of the Yank's hammer, and clinked back. It was too hot to shout. Then he commenced to think about the Yank, and grew distinctly resentful. A man should not pretend to be experienced if he wasn't. The feeling strengthened as he trailed wearily back at sundown. He found his companion in the shadow of the rock, reading a month-old paper. Johnstone knew every word in that paper. The other man glanced up inquiringly. Johnstone shook his head. There were no questions. The day's tale was told. When they had eaten, the Yank returned to the paper.

"What are you folks going to do about that four billion dollars?" he drawled presently.

"What four billion?" Johnstone knew perfectly, nevertheless.

"That you owe us. Ain't you proposing to pay up?"

Johnstone stared at him.

"Of course we ain't going to press you, considering the circumstances—at least, I ain't pressing you for your part of it, but I can't help being just a mite interested, as I reckon to get a bonus when the deal goes through. This paper says I don't get mine unless you pay up."

Johnstone experienced a sensation of wrath as sudden as it was inexcusable. He knew the Yank was what the latter called "stringing him." This had happened innumerable times, and always unexpectedly.

To-night it seemed out of place. He recognised the slow drawl, the cynical humour in the lean face, the quizzical light in the grey eyes, and there was nothing new in any of them. But this time the joke seemed to get under his skin. Perhaps it was because for days past the eternal voice of the desert had been speaking to him that this sardonic tone sounded the more provocative. Now he decided that it was too provocative. The Yank was a good man, and could fight. That was admitted. But he had seen four months' active service, while Johnstone had put in a shade over four years. He never dwelt on those four years, but he was conscious of them by reason of pictures that flashed back when they were least wanted.

"That's not my business," he said a little jerkily. "There be others to look after it."

"According to this paper, they're not straining themselves."

Johnstone frowned. "Happen there's more to it than the paper says."

The Yank folded the creased sheet and laid it carefully in the bottom of his pack-sack, for in the wilderness the printed word, be it wisdom or rot, is above price because it re-creates an invisible world. Then he glanced amusedly at his partner.

"Say, pilgrim, I'm ready to give you a quit deed right here for your share of it, and about two million other buddies will do the same thing. What about to-morrow? Do we stay here, or get out?"

Johnstone's gaze travelled to a ridge some three miles northward. He had wanted to examine that ridge that day, but the sun beat him. There was no particular reason why it should be more inviting than any other part of this blistering territory, but

he knew he wanted to get there. Also he wanted to get there alone. This desire grew till it became resolution. More than that, he wanted to take his soul away from the Yank for the entire day and give it a chance. And the debt—he wanted to think about that, too. A dozen answers were in his mind already. What a lot there was to be done—and at once—things he could only do for himself! Queer that one should be so suddenly busy in the desert, so much busier than he could remember having been in Devon. Devon! Where was Devon?

"We stay while the water holds," he said slowly. "I'll work to the north—no use tramping the same ground."

He lay awake again that night, listening to the clink of the mules' feet in the loose rock, with a queer sensation, breathless and not understandable, that all his past life had led up to the next few hours. Perhaps in the great solitudes the mind of man divests itself of the worn garment of custom, and becomes responsive to new and yet eternal influences that approach him the more easily because the doors of imagination are all flung open. Johnstone knew nothing of this, but perceived that strange and novel winds were blowing through the corridors of life. The War did not matter now, nor the Yank's talk about that debt, nor the heat that he would shortly endure, nor the dwindling water. It only mattered that he should spend the morrow alone on the torrid surface of that distant ridge. It seemed to have been saved over for him—Bill Johnstone, from nigh Bideford in Devon.

In the east the purple night was turning to orange when he woke, and a flame-coloured lizard, six feet from his face, watched him with diamond eyes. The desert, like a hollow, throbbing drum, gave out a myriad of tiny sounds that blended into the singing monotone men call silence. The Yank stretched his arms over his head, elongated his lean body in a yawn, and sat up. Then he looked at the waterhole.

"If we don't make a strike to-day, we quit. Gimme a match."

They ate deliberately, as do men who eat for a purpose—a shred of bacon, a new-made bannock moulded in the mouth of the flour-bag and baked beside a sage-brush fire, washing it down with draughts of strong, black coffee. Johnstone used to make coffee a teaspoonful to a cup, but the Yank used four, saving the grounds to fatten the evening brew. The latter rolled a cigarette against his thigh, an Arizona trick that

baffled the Britisher. Presently Johnstone got up, hooked a prospecting hammer into his belt and moved off. Fifty yards away he gave a short laugh.

"That four billion dollars," he said over his shoulder, "it doesn't include the interest we haven't paid." He rounded a boulder and disappeared.

The Yank blinked. He wanted to laugh, but something choked it. He never pretended to understand Johnny Bull, but had learned to depend on him, especially in a corner. "Interest!" he said half aloud. "Oh, hell!" He got his own tools together, stared thoughtfully at the waterhole, and struck westward.

In his turn the desert engulfed him, luring him with painted fingers along a trail where once the pterodactyl had pushed its scaly course. Pterodactyl and man were all one to the desert, merely marking succeeding seconds in the march of time. Once he got sight of Johnstone clambering over high ground a mile away. He looked like the only survivor in a ruined world. "Interest," said the Yank again, "by the great horned spoon—interest!"

Johnstone, for his part, was thinking about something quite different. Approaching the ridge, he knew with a sort of dry-lipped certainty that he had seen this place before. In what life he had seen it was another matter. It may be that some horny-footed ancestor of his once followed the pterodactyl here, or that he had explored the ridge in the shadow of a dream. Anyway, it was familiar. So, as he progressed, his consciousness moved on a hundred yards ahead, and there were no surprises. He was going straight to the thing he had dreamed of for months past. There was no question of its existence, the only point being how big it was. He would take his time. There was no hurry. At last he climbed the ridge and stood on its saw-toothed summit.

Looking down into a little ravine on the north side, he saw what appeared to be a wide, irregular ribbon running east and west. From edge to edge it was thirty feet. Its thousand-foot length dipped into the sand at either end. In colour it was a brownish yellow. Johnstone licked his lips, then sat down abruptly. The strength had gone out of his knees. Sitting there, he threw stones at the thing. No, there was no hurry. He began to wonder just how long it had waited there to be found like this. Presently he moved on, weakly, like a man out of a sick bed.

He stepped on the lode, marvelling at his own daring, and picked up a loose fragment. Heavy, yes, as it ought to be. All through it were tiny blocks and cubes of yellow, some of them seeming frozen together in oddly shaped lumps. From side to side it was the same, and for its entire length. Had there been only scattered yellow particles here and there, he would have shouted. But this amazing display silenced him. He had not dreamed there was so much gold in the world. It was not a mine, but a prodigious storehouse of wealth, and to enrich it Nature must have rifled her mountains of their treasure. Then he sat on the lode, running his palm over its sharp surface and talking to it as he would to a child. Came a confusion of whispers from the outer world of what he could now do if he wanted to. At this he smiled. He could do anything.

The sun smote on him, but he did not move, though there grew a dull pain in the back of his head. It was mid-afternoon before he reclimbed the ridge, stumbling a little as he walked. The distance from his eyes to the ground seemed to be constantly changing, and he remembered feeling like this the last time he was drunk. But he was not drunk now. Or was he? Half-way to camp he emptied his prospecting sack of all the samples except the yellowest and heaviest one, and swayed on with Hell's Hole dancing around him. He was king

of Hell's Hole now. He could buy the whole coast of Devon from Appledore to Clovelly. And, by Jupiter, he would! Then, within a stone-throw of the water-hole, he thought of the debt—and interest.

He lurched into camp, nearly falling over the Yank, who looked at him dully. A third man, seeing that look, would have called it resentful, but Johnstone only stood, still swaying, and felt in his sack, his eyes mysteriously bright, his dry lips twitching.

"Struck anything?" said the Yank briefly.

"I found a mint. See this, lad."

He dropped the one remaining sample



"Lad, lad, what do you make of it?"

into a calloused hand, his soul leaping within him as the grey eyes rounded and sharpened. Then the blood rushed to the Yank's face and as suddenly deserted it. The gaze of the two met and crossed like sharp swords, as though each demanded that the other give voice to unspeakable things.

"How much of this is there, and where?" The question came in a whisper.

Johnstone was not sure now whether there were two Yanks in camp or three. Yes, it was three. So he spoke to the middle one.

"Thirty feet wide and a thousand long—just on the other side of the ridge. Lad, lad, what do you make of it?"

"You mean thirty inches?" It was still a whisper.

Johnstone's anger flamed up. The man was either a fool, or mocked him. The pain in the back of his head got worse.

"We don't take inches for feet in Devon. It's five times the span of my arms. I measured it on my face to make sure. What's it worth?" He barked this out defiantly, feeling that as



"How much of this is there, and where?"



a multi-millionaire he was entitled to a certain respect.

"I don't know. Never heard of nothing like it before. Thirty feet! Jehoshaphat!"

"Is it worth a million?" Johnstone had passed beyond thinking of measurements and wanted to get down to figures.

The Yank balanced the sample with a sort of unconscious reverence. "As many darned millions as you like."

"A hundred of 'em?"

"Yes, and more. The stuff's half gold. Twenty dollars an ounce, and you can ship it like cement. Shut up and let me think."

Johnstone shook his head rapidly, trying to clear his eyes, across which little, red specks were dancing. Then figures dangled in front of him on an invisible screen. These fell into line like troops on parade.

"Look here," he said jerkily, "every blinkin' Britisher owes your country a hundred dollars, as I make it, and I'm going to pay for my battalion. Hanged if I don't pay for the whole First Army! I can afford it—with interest, too. And the next time you meet one of our lot you won't have so much to say about that bonus we did you out of." He hesitated. "Bo-bonus!" he repeated thickly. "Give me some—some water." He pitched forward on his face.

He came to himself with the Yank bending over him. A whisper drifted into his brain.

"There isn't any water, old son. You didn't give me a chance to tell you before."

Johnstone stared. His brain was not very clear, but there were two things in it, gold and water, both precious, and one of them was threatened. He could not make out which.

"The mules have moseyed, too, pilgrim. I guess they missed the smell of the pool, and quit. Reckon we'll have to hoof it back to Sharp's." Now, Sharp was a sheep man, whose ranch was just forty miles south, and there was no water between there and Hell's Hole.

Johnstone sat up, which hurt his head. "When?" he gurgled.

"Right now. We travel by night, when it's cooler. Gimme that sample. We shed the rest of the outfit till the return trip."

They set out, the Yank in the lead. Johnstone's head felt like a balloon. Also he was very thirsty. When a man is famished, he does not dwell on the Olympian meals of which he will partake later on. He may think of those he has had, but not of those to come. When, however, the tissues

of his body seem like dry straw, his imagination wallows in deep, green pools. He hears the mellow thunder of far cascades, pictures their drifting mist on his cheek, and catches the tinkling ripple of hidden streams that slide laughing to the sea.

So it was with Bill Johnstone, of Bideford in Devon. The pictures came, not all at once, but slowly and with maddening persistency. Also there was a definite affront in being worth a hundred million and yet not able to have a drink. His lips were cracked, his tongue was like a sun-baked root, and the balloon at the back of his head was nigh bursting. Hell's Hole crawled past him, rock and sand, sand and rock, with scattered giant cacti, spiny, moonstruck sentinels stiff by the trail that led to a secret treasure-house—his treasure-house!

Then something twanged in his brain. The Yank and he were partners. Half of the lode was the Yank's. But the latter had not spoken of this. Decent of him! Johnstone liked him for that.

"I say," he rasped, "of course we go equal shares on this."

The other man glanced back and nodded. "Yep. Don't talk—makes your mouth dry."

The sand pulled so at Johnstone's feet that instead of lifting them clear he began to drag them. This gave him a pain in his thighs. And he wanted to talk. Looking at the Yank's long, sloping shoulders, it struck him that the latter was playing in luck to be handed fifty million for doing nothing at all. A man's word was his bond, especially down Bideford way, but the Yank struck it rich when he was drafted, and just as the row was about over, too.

There is an hour in the desert just before dawn when a grey-green streak infringes softly on the solid, purple bowl of the sky. In the resultant half-light all things are ghostly, and dipped in a deeper silence than ever in order that mountains may talk and the empty places of the earth find speech. Johnstone must have guessed at something of this, for it seemed that things were talking all around him, but when he tried to reply and tell them about the lode, all he got was a curt word from the Yank, who presently dropped back and walked close beside him. When the grey-green streak was ribbed with scarlet, they lay down in the lee of a great rock on the southern rim of Hell's Hole.

The sun-struck man babbled all through

the day of the debt he would shortly make good, of the fountain he would build in Bideford Park, a freshwater fountain where anyone could get a drink, and of various happenings, both fine and ugly, not unconnected with the First Army. The Yank sat beside him, interjecting periodical and comforting words in a slow, reassuring drawl that somehow filtered into the wandering brain when they were most needed. Johnstone never knew that every two hours or so he was moved a few yards, so that when the merciless sun went down there was left at the base of the rock a semi-circular furrow which might have been made by a gigantic and slothful lizard.

Thus began the second night and the second half of the dry trail to Sharp's. Of the two, the Yank suffered most, for he knew he was suffering. No benison of madness clouded his reason, no fantastic imagery obliterated the stark peril of this hour. He dipped into his very soul for strength to go on, turning to that secret source of fortitude which in crucial moments determines whether a man be indeed a man. When there was a chance of being understood, he drew pictures of what they would do, each with his fifty million. When Johnstone turned back to get the lode and bring it out with him, the Yank pretended to be a Hun and, running southward, squeezed out a staggering, shouting hundred-yard advance toward life and water.

He began to experience a sort of savage joy in doing these things, but it was not till well through the second night that he understood why this should be so. Then he knew that it was because his partner was a Britisher, and had put in four years in another Hell's Hole against his own four months. Johnstone had never mentioned this, and he liked him for that. So if he could pull Johnstone through now, it would help to even the score. He didn't think about the fifty million. That would take care of itself. The thing was to lure his crazed companion on till he could see the line of black alders that marked the trampled waterhole a mile on this side of Sharp's ranch.

He won through an hour before dawn, the end being heralded by the softened and distant bleating of a multitude of invisible sheep. He had never thought much about Christ, but now he would not have been astonished to discern somewhere amongst those slow-footed flocks a Form, tall, grave, and divinely compassionate. The thought

gave him new strength, and he hoisted his staggering partner on his back, and, bent like Christopher with an immortal burden, summoned his last remaining powers. The grey-green streak was again painted on the horizon when he scooped up a palmful of muddy water and dashed it in Johnstone's face.

Twenty-four hours later there was a clatter of hooves outside the ranch house, and four men, well mounted and followed by six pack mules, came up. They formed a section of a party sent by the Geological Survey to determine what prospect of mineral value was afforded by this wilderness of ill-repute. Johnstone, who was nearly himself again, heard a scrap of conversation between the Chief, a short, brown, bearded man, and one of his assistants.

"Well," said the former briskly, "we'll stay here to-night, and strike east in the morning toward that quartzite intrusion. It may be more interesting."

"Is it anything like Hell's Hole?" asked the younger man.

The Chief shook his head. "One never knows till one gets there, but it can't be more barren. Pity there's no market hereabouts for pyrites."

"You're thinking of what we saw yesterday?"

The bearded man nodded. Then fell a little silence, during which Johnstone's heart beat like a trip hammer. What was it they saw yesterday? He wanted to wake the Yank, who was sleeping in the shade a hundred yards away, but was afraid of missing something. And it was the business of these men to know what they talked about. The assistant gave a little laugh.

"After we left that thirty-foot dyke," he said thoughtfully, "I couldn't help thinking about the effect that would be produced supposing it were discovered by a prospector who could not distinguish between fool's gold and the real thing. I imagine it might drive him crazy."

The Chief, already busy over his notes, did not answer. Johnstone sat quite rigid, and unable to move. "Streuth!" he whispered to himself. "Streuth!"

Moments later he seemed to come out of a trance which had obliterated all consciousness, except that instead of being worth fifty million, his total assets were something less than fifty dollars. He glared at the Chief, and suddenly hated him with a deep, venomous antipathy. Who was he to

go about blasting honest hopes like this? Simultaneously the latter thrust his note-book into a pocket, glanced at the battered figure with the strangely hot eyes, and tossed over a paper.

"Here's the news, if you want it."

Johnstone took it automatically. He didn't want any more news. The Chief strolled off, and silence descended again. Johnstone, still numb, shook his head like a dog, and his gaze wandered to the front page. The paper was only two weeks old.

"Settlement of British Debt to This Country.

Amicable Arrangement of Important

Question.

Washington Satisfied, and British Reputation for Honourable Financial Dealing Upheld."

He read slowly, carefully, and with absorbed attention, putting away point after point in his retentive brain. Finally he nodded.

"Bit of alright, those chaps at home," he said to himself, "and now I don't owe any

blinkin' Yank a ruddy farthing. But we're both out fifty million, just the same. Better tell mine, and have done with it."

He walked over to where his Yank lay asleep, and looked down. There was something gentle and almost tender in the lean brown face. The sun-cracked lips were moving with snatches of dreams that all centred on a thirty-foot lode, and what would shortly follow. Johnstone was smiling grimly at this when it came to him that the kindest thing to do was to let his partner and saviour glory a little longer in his fortune, though it was but a phantom. So, feeling queerly tired himself, he lay down in the comforting shade a few feet away, and instantly grew very drowsy. Before he dropped off he put the paper within a few inches of the Yank's slack fingers, and, raising himself on an elbow, took a long look at the blistering horizon.

"Strewth!" he said under his breath. "Strewth!"



## THE ALMOND TREE.

**T**HE almond tree, in the hours of Spring,  
Is a lovely thing, oh, a lovely thing!  
Oh, what might your home and country be  
Who have hidden yourself in the almond tree?  
Oh, the almond tree, in the hours of Spring,  
Is a lovely thing!

The almond tree, in the Spring's delight,  
Is a lovely sight, oh, a lovely sight!  
Oh, what is your secret and your name  
Who have hidden yourself in the almond flame?  
Oh, the almond tree, in the Spring's delight,  
Is a lovely sight!

The almond tree, in the hours of Spring,  
Is a lovely thing, oh, a lovely thing!  
Oh, what is your sudden gladness now  
Who laugh alone in the a'mond bough?  
Oh, the almond tree, in the hours of Spring,  
Is a lovely thing!

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.



"‘If a hundred pounds will help, Grig,’ I says, ‘or, for the matter of that, two hundred, I don’t know but what it might be managed.’"

# THE PROFITEER

By MICHAEL KENT

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

THE tale of Gregory Allday and how he came to his last estate is strange enough for anyone to want to set down, whether a friend of Gregory’s or not. Nettleship, where he was born and bred, couldn’t believe that it could raise a big man, and always thought there was a catch about the things it heard from time to time. When they learned of the low place he had won to towards the end, Nettleship folk were mighty wise about it. “Light come, light go,” said they. “Scarce two years gone he was splashing money like water. That’s the fun of the thing.”

But fun is like a cut stone. Toss it down and pick it up on another face, you get a different light on it.

I knew Grig myself when he and me used to sit hunch by hunch at St. Mildred’s Church schools. He was younger than me

by two years, but a long sight smarter, and many’s the telling off he’s saved me, not to speak of other things. Old Skelton could lay it in when he was so minded. So we always kept together even after I came to the shop. What’s more, being a watchmaker by trade and handy with my fingers, I made his models for him.

Of course him going to the garage when he grew up he had the luck to know what was wanted, but there’s another way of looking at it. How many other working men in garages up and down England at that time had the luck to know and never thought more about it?

This is no sort of a beginning, and driving a quill is no trade of mine, only I would have you like old Grig.

I remember him coming to me over ten years ago now. “Peter,” says he, “I’m too

big a fool to see what's wrong with it, but you're smart," he says. "You'll tell me."

I think he had the idea that brain smartness and smart clothes went together.

"What's wrong?" says I. "I reckon it's the door being left open and letting in a draught fit to blow the hair off my head."

"Beg pardon," he replied, taking the hint. "The plain fact is I've got that valve on my brain and forgot my manners."

That brought us to what he'd come for.

It was the—well, there I'm up against it. If I tell you just the name of the invention that old Grig had drawn up so careful on his sheets of letter paper, he'll be on my back like a hundred of bricks. Still, there it is. As he found afterwards, he'd got ten men's fortunes in his pocket.

"It'll never work," he said mournfully to me, "I know it won't work. What gets over me is why it won't."

It felt very superior to be asked advice by this chap who knew so much more than I did about it.

"We'll set up a model," says I, "and then we'll see."

I've never seen anyone caught so all of a heap in all my born days as when, three weeks later, he filled up the tank of his model with petrol and it did work.

"Peter," said he, "you haven't made it to the specifications. You put something in of your own!"

The old chap couldn't believe that he could have done it by himself.

"Show me where," I says, "and I'll give you a sovereign."

He looks at it a long time, twiddling the levers on and off as if he expected it had only worked by accident and wouldn't do it again. Then he fell quiet, looking so old-fashioned and far away I didn't like to disturb him.

At last he sort of woke up with a bit of a sigh. "Peter," says he, "I've had it in my mind ages, but I doubt this won't run to it—a little house and a bit of a garden with flowers, lots of flowers." Then he grew red in the face and thoughtful again. "And someone at home to be—friends with me, and for me to be—friends with."

Then all of a sudden it rushed on me like how Grig had never known his mother, while his father had been nothing to talk about.

The next thing that comes to me is Grig returning to Nettleship four years later. But a mortal lot of water had flowed under

Wyche bridge since he had sat in my parlour and dreamed of flower gardens.

So for old Grig's sake let me twist you up a link or two in his story and nip them snug before we come to his return.

There's the patent, for instance. I got it for Grig out of a Brummagem traveller. "There are ninety-nine ways of being done in and losing money over a perfectly good patent," said the drummer. "Take my tip, and go slow."

However, he'd told me all about it—search, provisional protection, and what all. Grig and I went into it, and it totted up near twelve pounds all told. That was only the beginning, mark you!

"It's not worth it," said Grig. "Twelve pounds is a lot of money."

However, he did what I said, and took his model to Dunthorpe, Calton, and Dodds. He brought back a cheque for a thousand pounds, and couldn't look Police-Sergeant Hawke in the face. "It isn't rightly mine," he protested. "Dunthorpe's have made a mistake. I'll keep it by in case there's inquiries or they get into money difficulties over it."

As a matter of fact, Dunthorpe's hadn't hurt themselves at all over their first year's licence to construct. Afterwards, on a new arrangement, royalties just about rained in.

It took Grig away to Coventry. He was glad to go, seemed downright ashamed of being seen in Nettleship. Then, as I say, he turned up four years later, not the same man at all.

But there, you never knew what he was like. Well, he was a little restless, ratty chap, broad-shouldered and deep in the chest, sallow, with a regular mask of a face. You could only reckon on three things from the hard-set mouth—kindness for one, pig-headedness for another, and, lastly, the never-sleeping need to hide some softnesses that were natural to him, so deep that his hard outer life would never bruise them. His eyes were "No admittance except on business," like as if the pupils let no light through. First and last a very ordinary kind of chap, you'd say, if you saw him in his overalls with a great smudge across his nose.

He was regular miserable when he came back four years later. He ran over the kerb and a matter of eighteen inches on to my pavement in the oldest old Ford you've ever seen, hopped out and looked at it doubtful-like, as though he weren't so certain it wouldn't collapse, and then walked into

my shop looking thoroughly ashamed of himself.

"Peter," he said very uncertain and wondering.

"By crimes," says I, "if it isn't Grig Allday!"

"Yes," he nods, with a bit of a sigh, "it's Grig Allday all right, Grig Allday."

"Come through," I says, "and tell me all your news. Your work's made a big noise in the world."

He put his hand up as if I'd hit him.

"Name," says he, "that's my trouble." And he turned to me looking like his heart was sick. I've seen men the same as him in the dock when I've been at the Guildhall. "I'm just as I was, Peter," he says, pleading, "I ain't a bit different."

I'd poured him out a glass of my parsnip wine, the wine he would have lent me a hand to bottle in the old days. "Then what's fretting you?" says I. "You wasn't used to wear a face all five by nine."

Trouble he had, sure enough.

"Money," he whispered, as if he was afraid someone might hear. "Peter, I've cut and run."

That was a facer. I always have been a careful man. Who lives in Nettleship must needs scratch if he's to lie warm when the day's work is done. Eyes and fingers won't stay for ever cunning enough for a watch-maker's craft. But here was old Grig, who'd always looked up to me like.

"If a hundred pounds will help, Grig," I says, "or, for a matter of that, two hundred, I don't know but what it might be managed. There's bad times, I says, and there's good times. You'll pick up."

He stared at me as if I'd taken leave of my proper senses. "What do you mean?" he says.

I put it to him. "Here am I, just rising forty. I'm snug. My business keeps me. There's no competition in all Nettleship, and that's a matter of four thousand souls. If I can't manage a couple of hundred for a chap what's been my pal ever since we took rooks' eggs out of Pennyfields Elms, why——"

He stopped me at that. "Pete, Pete," he said, knocking off the "r" as he used to do before he was old enough to see that I was superior because my father kept a shop, "you're a real old chum. You've done me more good than I'd have dreamed." He took a deep breath or so. The first ones fluttered, but the last were sound.

"You've made me wholesome in my heart again."

"Then we'll call it settled," I said, and took out my keys. "Two hundred——"

He laughed like I never thought he would when he came in so sagged and dragged.

"No," he says, "it isn't want of money. It's *having too much* of it that hurts. I don't know what to do."

Now, there's a picture for you, as the old song runs.

I got him talking, me sitting there with my pipe, and my eye on the little glass pane in the parlour door that shows the counter and the till. The door swings outward, and I can be outside in two seconds. As for talk, he was full of it, though, mind you, I doubt if anyone but me could have got him going.

"Pete," says he, "I'm sick and tired of it all, and nothing seems to stop it. First when it began to come in, thinks I, I'll take no notice. Besides, I won't deny it was like a new game going in to my office at Coventry—office they gave me, when what I wanted was a bench—and folk saying 'sir' to me, and all. Then someone puts it to me I wasn't fulfilling the responsibilities of wealth. It was mean, not spending. Well, I went away with a Rolls-Royce and lots of white shirts to feed in at night. Consequence, I was a vulgar profiteer. See what I mean? There's no pleasing folk. Sure enough, I could never finish feeding, and have all the little forks and glasses and so on properly used up as they ought to be." He gave a bit of a grin at that. "They never taught such at St. Mildred's," said he.

"Crimes!" I said. "A bit of your complaint, Grig, wouldn't hurt me!"

"Wouldn't it?" he asks, eager like.

"It would not," says I, very firm.

He perks up at that. "Very good," he says. "Those models you made I paid you twenty-five pounds for, all told, with the advice you gave me thrown in, and you never saw your money till I got paid. Now," he says, "the job you did is bringing me in fifteen thousand a year. Suppose we reckon your work at only one per cent., then this last four years I've been owing you six hundred pounds round about. That's something to the good, anyway. I'll send you a cheq——"

"You'll do no such thing," I told him, pretty warm. "I was paid for my job—well paid and satisfied, Grig. I take nothing I have not earned. Can't a chum be a chum?"

He laughed no end; then, of a sudden, he pulled up sober as a bishop. "You see the point?" he said. "We're chums, and a penny over the bare worth of stuff sold or work done would spoil it all—barring you were in trouble, like you thought I was just now. Ain't it so?"

It was so. Come to think of it, money's a terribly ticklish thing.

"Look," he went on, "four years of it, and ne'er a hand's turn done that I could be sure was done for me—me. Ne'er a pleasant word or a nod that might not have been for the row of noughts in my banking account."

"But," says I, "you can buy everything you want, Grig."

"No," he puts in sharp. "The real things a man can want ain't never bought at all—wild flowers growing, and storm cloud, the smell of wet earth at evening, wood smoke lazy in gardens on October days, sunset and moonrise, they're free to all. Then there's the rest a man wants, fast friends and fellowship, someone to—to sort of tell your mind to, if need be. Money never buys those at all."

That last kept us quiet for a bit.

"The worst of it's the profiteer," he said at last. "Presumptuous fellow butting into places he's not born or bred to."

I reckon I guessed rightly that was something he'd overheard.

"But," said I to take his mind off, "you might have married."

"Yes," he said, very slow, "and that would have been wickedest of all."

Then someone came into the shop.

"Who is it?" he asked, when I looked in for my glasses. "Anyone I know?"

"You'd hardly call to mind," I says. "It's young James Harben, Nicholas Harben's son. I've looked for him coming these three weeks. It's a ring. He'll be married on Monday to Janet Bunce, what's parlourmaid to Doctor Wells."

"Lucky lad!" says he, and then on a sudden: "Look here, Pete, tell him I'll pay for—"

At that it cut into him terrible, like a knife, the thought of him offering to buy Jim Harben's wedding ring. I went out sharp, and when I came back his head was in his hands.

Fifteen thousand a year, mark you!

"Now you see it," he said at last, very low. "The real true folk I can't touch or serve, while I've but to hold up my finger and have every scabby good-for-naught

in the Midlands to lick my boots, or make bad living easy, or tell me what a fine chap I am, when I ain't a fine chap at all, but plain Grig Allday, what's used to machinery and knows the secret ways of metal."

I reckon old Grig was cut out for one of these poets, only Alldays being smiths in Nettleship ever since time, as they say, he'd got that in him, too. Maybe his work was poetry in metal.

When he went away after tea, he spoke again of my refusing that money. "I'm mortal glad you wouldn't take that, Pete," said he. "As for my trouble, I'll get quit of it all some day. Give it to the government, likely. I'll look you up again when things are brighter." He cranked up his car and set it shivering all over. "Wonder if I'll get home all right?" he said, and he grinned like he was happy. "This old 'bus has been running seventeen years, Pete, and I reckon she was a sewing machine before that. She averages twenty-seven miles to a breakdown, but I've got a full kit of gadgets, and I can keep upsides with her. It's the only sport I have. Reckon I'll knock twenty to the hour out of her before I've done!"

The human heart, in my opinion, is pretty nigh as intricate as one of these old English levers.

A matter of a year later Grig Allday slipped into my shop while I had a glass in my eye and was satisfying myself about the movements of a repair.

"Hullo!" said he. "You do look smart, Peter. Going ahead?"

I shook hands. "Grig," says I, "where did you jump from? And in that rig-out!"

I'd never have dreamed of him sporting a get-up like that. Corduroy coat and breeches, black leggings and no waistcoat. Likewise I'd never seen him so brown, nor with that splash of colour like red wine on his cheeks.

He laughed like a man who is his own master. "Talking of rig-outs," he said, "how about yourself?" He pointed to the shop window.

That was my landlord's affair. If I'd asked Edward Cooper once for a new shop front, I'd asked him fifty times. I told Grig.

"Business good?" asked he.

Well, I couldn't grumble, I told him.

"Too good to take on a half-day job at Malthouse?" he asked. "Exes free?"

"First," said I, "tell me all about yourself."

"I am," he answered, grinning. "That big dower house just off the road is some sort of institution. 'Malthouse Dower,' they call it. As far as I can see, it is run for these new poor. There's a bit of a park, garden, and a power of clocks in it, Peter. I've been told to ask you if you'd care to come and wind 'em up once a week?"

"Why," said I, "what have you to do with it?"

"I'm the gardener," he said.

That was a facer. "But—fifteen thousand a year, Grig?"

"Got shut of it," said he sharp, "and the best thing, too."

"But you'd sell it for a mint of money," I says, "unless you gave it away."

He nodded his head. "What's money?" says he. "It comes and goes. It's no odds as long as you're happy."

Bless you, I could see with half an eye Grig was happy. There was something more, too. Somehow he seemed more easy with words, more of a scholar, if you know what I mean.

"We grow all our own stuff," he said, proud as a toad with side-pockets. "And there's a deal we send into the hospital, too. But the question is, will you see to the clocks, Pete? Committee want to know. I mentioned your name to them. If they sent into Reading, they'd pay more and get no better service. Besides, you'd be over once a week, Pete. We'd have a talk."

Well, the first and last of it is, I went. Malthouse is a little place, all black timber and whitewash, with ne'er a pavement bar the bit in front of "The Three Cats' Heads."

As for Malthouse Dower, it was the queerest institution I'd ever set eyes on. A fine old house, mark you, grown liver-coloured with time, a big hollow square, and in the centre a clock—rare old bit of craft that clock, with three hundred of weights dropping through twelve foot in a week. I earned my pay winding her! Under the clock you went through an arch to a court of cobbles with a built-over walk all round—like you see in Barchester Cathedral—and all the windows were little leaded diamonds. Some grand old folk lived there, but come down, though there was nothing to rub that in. Seems to me it was for the old good servants of days gone to wait upon the little needs of old good masters and mistresses what the world had not been kind to. The place was trying

to keep alive something that is nearly dead and done with these days, though, mark you, it will spring again. Mankind don't go back, in the long run.

Whenever I went over there was always time to look up Grig among his flowers.

"Well, how is it going, Grig?" I'd ask.

"I ask nothing better, Pete," he'd say. "Those beeswing dahlias are coming on a treat."

He'd take me along his borders, proud as a peacock—proud, him what had been crushed and humbled under fifteen thousand a year! "And not a soul passes but stops to feast his eyes."

Now, that's justification of a man's work in the world. "Man doth not live by bread alone." If he goes more jocund on his way for sight of a bloom, who under Providence made that flower spring earns praise. I've heard Grig say, looking at his borders, a bit of poetry out of his head:

"Then my heart with pleasure fills  
A-dancing with the daffodils."

Something like that.

"And this pays for all the money you lost, Grig?" I asked him once.

"Just about," said he, and the way he said it made me sure.

But I suppose ever since Eden there has been a snake in the garden. It took me half a year to come at it, bit by bit. The long and short of it came out one day in the spring, as I was smoking a pipe with Grig in his little cottage place that stood off the main drive up.

"It is Mrs. Quinn," says he.

"Number one South Court," says I. "I know her. I put in a broken mainspring for her once and, 'It has taken you a long while to do it, my man,' was all the thanks I got. What's her trouble, Grig?"

"You know," he explained, "I take flowers round to every suite on Saturday mornings. There's often something a bit choice. Just now, it's the earliest tulips. There's scarce enough to go round. Whatever it is, if Mrs. Quinn sees them she wants the lot." He shifted his pipe from one side of his mouth to the other. "It isn't fair. Only yesterday I found her getting at Robb, my under-man. Giving him half-a-crown to get him to see she had those tulips. I told Robb that if ever I saw such a thing again it would be the last flower he would cut in Malthouse Dower—and she stayed and listened to it."

"Well?" I asked.





"'Gentlemen,' said she, 'are you going to cast out of your employ this most knightly and chivalrous servant?'"

"Then," returned Grig grimly, "I stayed and listened to her."

We smoked on in silence for a while after that.

"That's a taking photograph you've got there, Grig," I said at last.

It was of Mrs. Quinn's companion, Miss Hughes, standing in the court to feed the pigeons.

"Yes," said he. "She gave it to me."

"What?" I asked, with my hand in front of my mouth. "Mrs. Quinn?"

"No," he said sharply, and added slowly, "Miss Mavis Hughes."

"It makes a nice picture," I said.

"Couldn't help doing that," he returned.

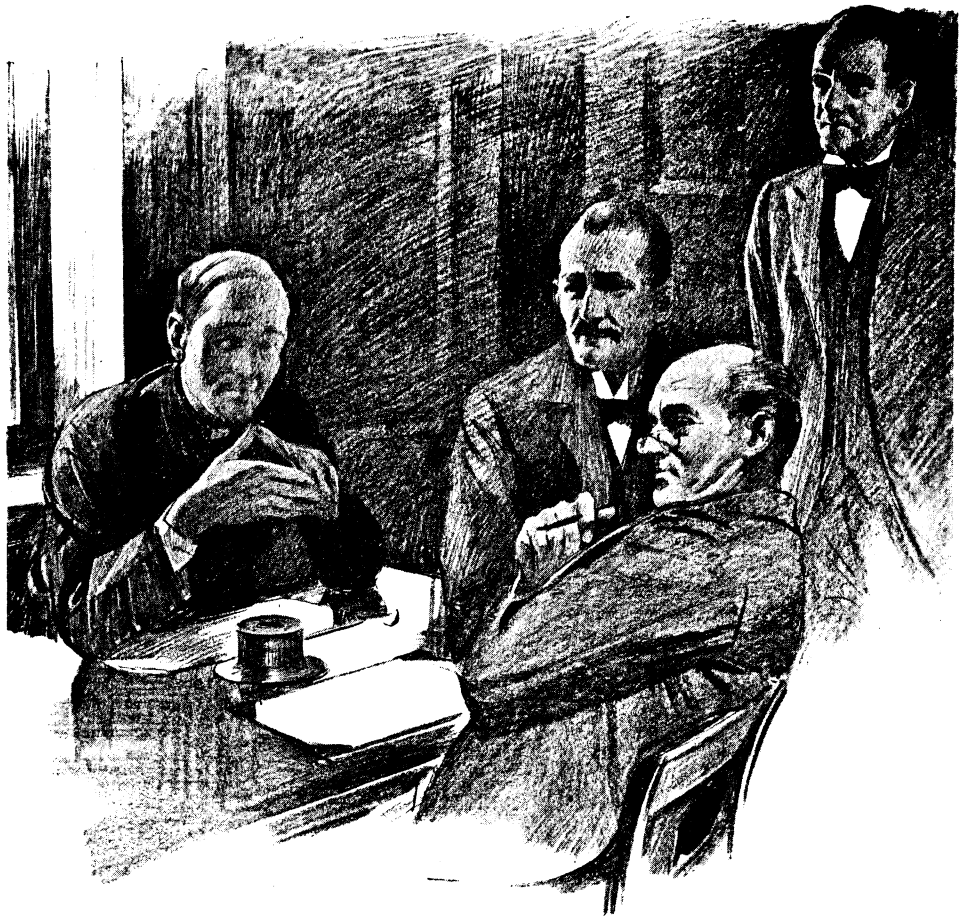
It was clear to me that he would be glad to talk of something else, so I did.

It wasn't long after that there came a knock at the door. Grig went to open it. It was Miss Hughes.

"Gregory," said she, "I've come to bring you Kipling's 'Rewards and Fairies.' Oh, Mr. Baldwin, you are not gone yet."

"I'm having a chat with my friend, miss," I said.

"Please don't let me disturb you," she said as I got up. "I only came round to



"We cannot tolerate the *employés* insulting beneficiaries under the scheme."

bring Mr. Allday a book I want him to read. But friends are better than books, aren't they?" she asked, smiling.

"Books are a lamp," said Grig, "but friendship's a warm hearth."

He never talked to me like he talked to that Miss Hughes, all that he'd ever dreamed about beauty and kind fellowship and folk living sweetly side by side upon the earth. When she went away I chipped him a bit.

"Well," I said, "if there is someone here who doesn't take to you, Grig, there's someone who does."

"Pete," he said soberly, "she's a lady; she must be a saint, too, or she'd never be able to live with Mrs. Quinn and keep her nature sweet and sunny. It was more than I could do to keep my tongue between my teeth this morning."

"It's wisest to," I said, but he only glowered at that. I guess he saw the truth of it. And to think of that—Grig Allday, gardener, keeping his tongue between his teeth for fear of losing his job, who maybe

twelve months before was worth fifteen thousand a year!

Thinking it over going home, I felt pretty certain that there would be a flare up at Malthouse Dower some day, and my very next visit I found I was right.

That was the sort of day to put into a book or a cinema. The first thing that I noticed was seeing Sir Knighton Phelps in his car turn into the drive before me. The Reverend Dane, afoot, was half-way to the house.

"Committee meeting," I says to myself. "That's strange. It isn't the first Tuesday of the month."

In the cottage Grig was putting on a clean collar.

"Got a committee, Grig?" I asked.

"I have," he said pretty short and blunt.

"Are they going to give you a rise?"

"Drat it," says he, "it's bust!"

I was talking to him up the stairs.

"Pete," he asked me, "look in the drawer of the press and chuck me up a stud.

This one's split and half of it's down my back."

There were two top drawers in the press. Pulling open one, I saw my own name in my own fist on one of my own business memos, "Your obedient servant, Peter Baldwin."

It brought me up all standing like seeing a ghost. I'd never had cause to write like that to Grig. Before I knew I'd placed it as a letter written to Cooper, my landlord asking for a new kitchen range. It was half folded in a typewritten sheet headed "Galton and Whittick, Solicitors." I shut it up in a hurry and called up to Grig to know which drawer, but you can't snick your mind to like closing a drawer.

By the look of it, Edward Cooper wouldn't really be my landlord at all. It was rather a mystery.

"I'll go on up to the house," I said. "Here's your collar stud, Grig."

On the way up who should I meet but Miss Hughes coming down?

"A nice morning, miss," I said.

"Lies, lies!" she returned fiercely, and then, turning her head on her shoulder, for by that time she had got two paces past: "You'll stand by him, Mr. Baldwin!"

Now, what on earth did that mean? And where on earth was the young woman off to, if not to Grig's cottage?

As I afterwards heard, she met him coming up the drive, and "Gregory Allday," she said, "I am of little account, but I would have you know that I am on your side in this for all the good I can ever do and as long as you will."

That Gregory told me himself, but I guess that what he answered and what followed on that, is his alone and not for everyone to read.

However, by the time I'd wound the gate chamber clock and North Court Turret, I came in due course to the committee room. Naturally I wasn't to know that there was a committee on. Anyhow, I was eager as a ferret to hear what was going forward. I just walked in without a knock.

There was the Board sitting. Sir Knighton was on his feet and making some sort of speech. The Reverend Dane, looking down his nose, sat picking holes with a pen in a blotting pad, and Mr. Lawyer Sankey, rubbing his chin, looked up under his brows at Grig standing at the end of the table.

Everyone was so taken up with the job in hand that they took no account

of me standing behind Sir Knighton's chair.

"... according to our trust," Sir Knighton was saying, "to the anonymous founder of this institution. Then also we have a duty to Mrs. Quinn, and no less a duty to you. What have you to say about it?"

He sat down.

"If you've a fair case, don't be afraid to put it, Allday," said the parson kindly.

"The occasion is privileged, in any circumstances," put in the solicitor.

Grig looked down at his hands. "I trust I've given you satisfaction, sirs," he said. "But about Mrs. Quinn. She was always up against me one way or another, wanting the best of flowers and fruit and vegetables, though everyone else in the place might go without, and being very high-handed with me when she only got her share. I could put up with that one way and another, but when last Saturday I came on her laying into me—into Miss Hughes with her tongue, I let fly."

"What was she saying?" asked Sankey, and took up a pen.

"Throwing the poor lady's poverty in her teeth," said Grig. "Saying that Miss Hughes would never be at Malthouse Dower but for her, and that she wasn't sufficiently grateful. Then she went on to say cruel things to her for being kind to me with books. That's where I came in through the door, which was ajar. I'd knocked three times, and no one took any notice."

"What did you say?" asked Sir Knighton.

"I told her she wasn't fit to be in an abode of gentlefolk," returned Grig, "and I told her that what she said was vulgar and wasn't true, and I told her she knew it wasn't true."

"Then," cried Sir Knighton, banging his fist on the table and sending his papers fluttering on the floor, "you must apologise!"

"I can't," said Grig stubbornly. "It's true."

"True or not true——" began Sir Knighton. But I didn't hear what followed, for I was busy picking up the papers. Then someone came in at the door behind me. It was Miss Hughes. She walked up to where Grig stood and stopped beside him.

"Gentlemen," said she, "are you going to cast out of your employ this most knightly and chivalrous servant?"

"Tut, tut, tut!" broke in Sir Knighton.

"We cannot tolerate the *employés* insul-  
tating beneficiaries under the scheme."

"Then I must go as well," said Miss Hughes. "If Gregory Allday had been something less than he is, he could have stayed silent and saved himself this trouble."

"He can apologise to Mrs. Quinn," said Sankey.

And just at that moment something dawned on me which, if I'd been half awake, I should have known before. The headings on the papers in my hand were mostly all from Galton and Whittick, just like the one I'd seen in Grig's own press. The top one ran "*Re* Malthouse Dower. In regard to your committee's request for direction from our client, the Founder—"

You see, the thing snapped into place like a swivel ring. I could hardly credit Grig hiding behind those solicitors to be my landlord, but the founder of this place was hiding behind the same people! Then there was all Grig's money gone like smoke.

"We must respect our trust to the founder," began Sir Knighton.

"Bless you, Sir Knighton," I cried, "he's there!"

"What's this?" asked the chairman, turning angrily round.

"Founder of the Dower House," said I. "Old Grig Allday. Ask him if he's not, sir."

Everyone stared down the table at my old chum.

"That's settled it," said Grig mournfully. "How did you come to know, Peter?"

I'd no time for explanations, for before I could speak the entire Board rose to its feet and said "Founder!" like a children's party playing "Snap."

"I'm very sorry, gentlemen," said Grig, still staring miserably down. "I didn't mean to be presumptuous. But the way the money kept coming in got on my mind. I don't care for money—and I love an old garden. What could I do, gentlemen? Scattering it only seemed to make folk lazy or cunning or bad, and me a sort of out-of-place figure of fun. 'There's lots of good in the art of life that great folk use,' I thought, 'though, not being bred to it, I can only look on at it. Still, I'd like to see it flourish like a flower.' So I went to Galton and put it to him if there was anything wrong in me not being known. That's how it is, gentlemen, and my humble thanks to you for carrying on so well."

For five seconds you might have heard a pin drop in that room, then Sir Knighton

came from his place and stood beside the high chair and spoke to his fellows of the Board. "Gentlemen," said he, "I think it well that we should rise until our natural chairman takes his rightful place."

With a nod that was half a little bow he motioned Grig to the chair.

Again there was a spell of quiet. Then the parson, smiling wistfully, with shining eyes, said, only speaking his thought aloud: "On the high peaks we, rank and file of the earth, must ask words from the great ones to fit our needs. I think of Kipling's:

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the  
Master shall blame,  
And no one shall work for money and no one shall  
work for fame,  
But each for the joy of the working. . . .

That was a poet's dream of heaven. Our own friend and master, Gregory Allday, has, I think, almost made it true upon this corner of earth."

Gregory looked up "Sirs," he said, "Mr Dane is right, although I didn't know it. It's true he's shown me at what I've aimed and fallen far short of. I never knew before, but now it seems so clear that the joy of the working is the only thing worth going for. I'm in debt to you all for the help you have given me and for your kind way of hearing my secret." He looked pleadingly round. "May it be as dead a secret still?"

"It's for you to say, sir," said Sir Knighton. "Speaking for the Board, I'll say we're proud to be your servants still."

"No, no," said Grig. "My wise and kind advisers." He sighed as though he had settled one great difficulty. "That's clear, then," he said. "The founder of the Dower House is still unknown. And now there's Mrs. Quinn. Gentlemen, I want to say nothing unkind, but she breaks our harmony here. Dismiss your gardener, gentlemen."

"Impossible," broke in Sankey. "Then she wins!"

He fell silent, for it was plain that Grig was going on.

"Dismiss your gardener. We can allow Mrs. Quinn a sufficient income—say two hundred a year—to live somewhere else, right out of our garden."

"Never knew anything so generous," grumbled Sankey, making notes.

"Sir," said Grig, "I have cause to be. But for Mrs. Quinn, I should not have the privilege of introducing to you to-day my future wife, Miss Mavis Hughes."

She took a step towards him around the table. "But, Gregory," she said, "I did not know. It cannot be."

"My dear," said he, "have I done aught to destroy your love and loyalty? I'm still Grig Allday"—he smiled and took her hand—"and I've lost my job." Once more he addressed the Board. "Gentlemen," he said, "you have much to arrange, and Mavis and I and old Peter there a lot to talk about. Will you excuse us?"

Sir Knighton went to the door and opened it. Sankey and the parson placed themselves beside him in a row. Old Grig took Mavis on his arm and stretched his left hand out

to me. So together we walked through, and, smiling, the Board bowed congratulations.

"Mavis," said Grig outside upon the stair, "we'll get a cottage at Malthouse here, close by."

Then all at once there came to me his words that night he brought his plans for me to see. I called the picture to his mind. "A little house and a bit of garden with flowers, and someone at home to be friends with me and for me to be friends with."

Well, that's the tale of Gregory Allday.



## A SONG IN SEASON.

OH, April days,  
 Since you are here,  
 Love cometh soon  
 With tears and laughter—childish ways;  
 March hummed a tune  
 We wearied of,  
 But now we heed  
 Pan with his wistful river-reed,  
 Piping of Love  
 Since you are here,  
 Oh, April days!

PERCY HASELDEN.



MORE SUITABLE.

HER FATHER: How old are you?

SUTOR: Twenty-one, sir.

HER FATHER: And my daughter is twenty-seven. Why not wait until *you* are twenty-seven, and she will then be about the same age?

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### A MATTER OF OBSERVATION.

*By Herbert Strudwick.*

THE atmosphere was electrical. This much was quite obvious from the manner in which Heather handed my plate over to me.

"That's the worst of men," she said. "They never notice things."

"Give me a chance to taste it," I said. "Besides, I thought it was Mary's pastry."

"Oh, I don't mean that," she said. "To do you justice, you don't miss much in the way of food. I meant petticoats."

"Really, Heather," I said, "would you have a respectable married man——"

"Fatuous one!" said Heather, cutting short my protest. "Who but a man would let a girl walk through the Park showing a full inch of petticoat beneath her dark skirt? You *must* have noticed it. You couldn't possibly be so unobservant as all that!"

Heather looks ripping when she tilts her chin, but she takes a lot of convincing when it is at that angle.

"What about that new hat?" I interrupted hopefully. It was a chance shot, but it came off. My lack of observation was forgotten, and the question of headgear became of paramount importance.

It appeared that Heather must get the hat to-morrow, in order to wear it at the Flemington-Smiths' the following day. Moreover, it was arranged that I should meet her, after she had finished her shopping, and take her out to tea.

"Where did you say?" I inquired.

"Four o'clock outside the Tube station, and I do hope you will be pleased with it, Jack."

"I'm sure I shall," I said with enthusiasm. "I simply love Tube stations!"

\* \* \* \* \*

At 4.20 the next day I took up a good stance at the appointed spot and kept a vigilant look-out for new hats. There appeared to be many answering that description. But then Piccadilly Circus is like that!

At last she came—Heather her radiant self, after the joys of shopping positively effulgent. She had on the sauciest little hat imaginable, with a rakish tilt over the left eye.

"By Jove, that's topping!" I said with genuine admiration. "It suits you down to the ground. Your eyes look bluer than ever."

Heather eyed me askance. It was clear that she was a little suspicious of me.

"Let's have some tea," she said simply but earnestly.

We found our usual little table vacant, and Heather bumbled of her new purchases whilst performing feats of endurance with various sugary cakes.

"That's your fifth!" I remarked brightly.

She looked at me defiantly. "I am going to have that one with the mauve icing and the marzipan, anyway!"

"Making a grand total of six cakes, four pieces of bread-and-butter, and three cups of tea."

"You are being perfectly horrid, sitting

quite that angle. And that little kink over the left eye is an inspiration. How on earth did you manage to get a hat to tone so well with that old blue jumper? I always did like that old jumper," I added, warming to my task. "It hasn't lost its shape a bit, and it makes your eyes——"

"Yes, you said that before," interrupted Heather in her best North Pole manner. "You may think you are being extremely observant, but you are really being too stupid for words."



ANOTHER SEX PROBLEM.

CUSTOMER: I want an E string, please, miss.

NEW ASSISTANT: Would you mind picking one out for yourself, sir? I don't know the 'E's from the she's.

there and watching all I eat," said Heather, swallowing hard.

I leaned across the table and looked her squarely in the face. "I am only being observant!" I hissed.

"Pig!" remarked Heather with wifely sincerity. "Foolish pig!" she added with descriptive fervour.

The compliment was not obvious, but I recognised it as an admission of my success—so much so that I did not hesitate to follow it up on our way home in the cab.

"That feather arrangement," I said, "is awfully cute. I haven't seen one fixed at

"And why, madam?" I asked, with lofty dignity.

"Wait!" said Heather cryptically.

\* \* \* \* \*

We had scarcely got inside the house before a delivery van pulled up at the gate. He then rushed back to the door and returned with a large cardboard box. She opened it ecstatically and produced—a hat.

"There, most observant of husbands!" she cried triumphantly. "There is the *new* hat! It's a pity you wasted your time on that old thing I was wearing all last winter!"

I involuntarily gave my far-famed imitation of an incredulous codfish.

"And," she continued relentlessly, "it may interest you to know that the old blue jumper you have admired for so long was bought precisely three hours ago. Here's the bill, darling!"

I am reluctantly inclined to think that Heather won on points.



#### A FALSE ALARM.

By E. Spencer.

SPRING cleaning was almost ended. Only the silver remained, and then the house would be in apple-pie order once more. Everybody had been pressed into service, except Baby, who was too young. Father was putting on the Polisho; Mother was rubbing it off; John and Elsie were emptying and shaking the baize bags and refilling them with shining spoons and forks.

In the midst of all this bustle Baby was seen draining the contents of the Polisho bottle down his throat. With a scream Mother caught him in her arms.

"What shall we do?" she wailed.

"Run for the doctor, John," commanded Father.

"He's gone to London," said Elsie, beginning to cry. "I heard him tell the Vicar that he wouldn't be back till evening."

"First-aid book," suggested Mother, as Baby, seeing the general consternation, belowed lustily.

"Where is it?" demanded Father.

Receiving no answer, he searched the bookcase.

"I can't find it!" he exclaimed above the mournful noise.

"What?" asked Mother.

"First-aid book!" he shouted.

"On top of the tongue under the scone in the pantry," said Mother. "Oh, do hurry!"

"I said 'First-aid book,'" Father replied in amazement.

"I used it to press the tongue—couldn't find the weight. Take a taper," Mother replied.

But the tapers had found a new home during the general upheaval, and took some

time to find. After considerable delay Father reappeared from the gloomy depths of the pantry, the first-aid book in his hand.

"Poisoning!" he exclaimed, searching the index. "Is it acid or alkaline?"

"I don't know!" cried Mother frantically, holding the howling child still closer.

"Give an emetic," said Father. "Emetic, emetic!" he continued, again consulting the



WORTH THE RISK.

"THE Doctor says I've got to give up cigarette smoking."  
"Oh, Horace! Can't you hold out until we've got enough coupons for that grand piano?"

index. "I've got it! Salt in warm water to make him sick. If that fails, try mustard and water."

The salt water failed to reproduce the Polisho, and Baby resolutely refused the mustard and water. Mother scolded and coaxed by turns; Father produced pennies; Elsie clapped her hands; John stood on his head in the corner. Baby stopped crying to watch the



antics, but could not be persuaded to take the mustard and water.

Father suddenly burst into peals of laughter.

"Father," said Mother reproachfully, "how can you laugh when our darling may be dying?"

"My dear," gasped Father, between paroxysms of mirth, "I've just remembered—the bottle was empty!"



DURING the course of a village festivity there was a dance in the parish hall, at which a guest from a neighbouring village, to whom such a

#### EVICTED.

They turned her from her home one day—  
No formal notice had been given;  
They simply said she could not stay—  
Small wonder that her heart was riven.

No empty houses to be had,  
No flats of any kind or rental,  
Yet she must leave—it seemed too bad—  
The home she'd made so ornamental.

And yet she did not weep, protest,  
Nor even wait to ask their meaning,  
She realised that flight was best,  
This spider, frightened by spring cleaning!

Leslie M. Oylar.



THE SUBSTITUTE.

DOCTOR: Good mor— but—why—what—er—er—

OLD JARGE: Marnin', doctor. We couldn't get no ice, as you ordered, so t' old woman got a bit of frozen meat from t' butcher, straight from t' refrigerator, an' I feels a new man already!

function was a novelty, was approached by a local farmer, who inquired with great suavity—

"Mrs. Johnson, is your programme full?"

"No, Mr. Spencer," said the lady "It takes more than a sandwich and a piece of cake to fill my programme!"



AN English visitor remarked to the manager of a Paris restaurant on the window of which was written the comprehensive claim, "*Ici on parle toutes les langues*": "You must have a great many interpreters here."

"Not one," was the reply.

"Who, then, is it that speaks all the languages?"

"The customers, monsieur."

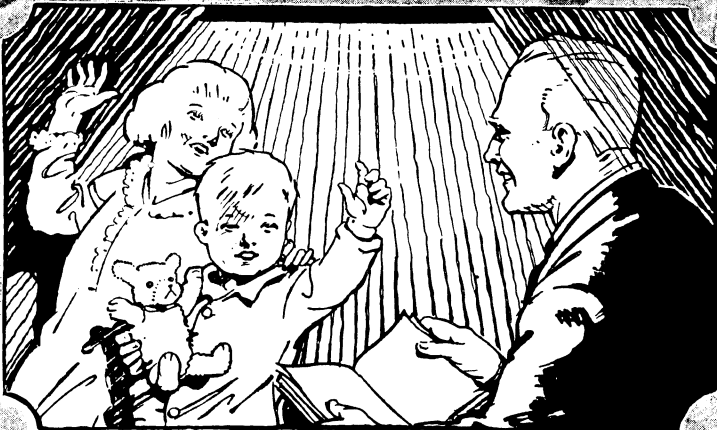
THE lecturer was warming to his subject, and presently came with an eloquent burst to the statement—

"Man, as we have seen, is a progressive being, but many other creatures are stationary. Take the ass, for example: always and everywhere the ass is the same creature. You never have seen, and never *will* see, a more perfect ass than you see at the present moment."



EMPLOYER: If you couldn't make anyone hear at the first house, why didn't you inquire at the next?

ERRAND BOY: Because the next house was a passage, sir.



## "SLEEP WELL!"

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JAMES AND THE ANGEL.

By A. F. Hutt.

"COME along, James," I said testily. "Do buck up, man. Thunder and I wait for no man, with petrol at its present price.

"Good-bye, dear!" I shouted, curtailing my wife's farewell instructions.

"You all right, James?"

My friend nodded as Thunder, my beloved Ford, panted out of trim Chestnut Avenue on to the main road, where she proceeded to rattle along at such a reckless pace that a nervous cyclist, hearing my brand-new horn—which gives forth a screech comparable only to the death-cry of a jackal—and observing our fiery chariot hard on his heels, ceased to pedal, and collapsed into the thorny depths of the roadside ditch.

"First blood!" I whooped joyously, as we flashed past a pair of wildly waving boots.

James failed to respond to my jest. He continued to masticate a cigarette with a total lack of enthusiasm. His brow was corrugated, his chin had lost its aggressive angle. In a word, he brooded.

"What is the trouble?" I inquired.

"Eh?" said James, with a vacant stare.

"What ails you?" I demanded.

"Oh," he grunted, "I'm all right," and relapsed into gloom.

At length, when we were just outside Dulditch, and Thunder had ceased to protest, I was able to turn my attention to James. I felt obliged to register an objection.

"Look here, this is a pleasure jaunt, not a funeral. You really must brace up, or the yokels will clamour for permission to view the corpse."

A sickly smile stole over my friend's face. He cleared his throat.

"Fact is," he muttered, avoiding my eye, "I was thinking about an angel. I met one on the links this morning."

"My dear old fellow," I murmured, "we'll pull up at Godwin's for a good strong cup of tea, then get home as fast as Thunder will allow, and tuck you into an early bed. You'll be as right as rain to-morrow."

"Don't be an ass," said James, as I pulled up outside the tea-shop.

I got out of the car and, heedless of his protests, led James gently but firmly into the shop.

"You need a nice, strong cup of tea," I repeated, steering him towards a vacant table.

I ordered tea, then leaned back and inspected my companion.

"You look normal," I was forced to admit. "Just try not to think of—er—celestial beings,



A MAN OF RESOURCE.

"Let go me legs, Bill, I tell ye, or I'll 'it ye over the 'ead with me 'ammer!"

and I will pull you through. As they say in the local rag, 'the case is in the capable hands of Doctor X.'"

James moved restlessly, as if his chair were uncomfortable.

"I must tell you!" he cried. "She was the most wonderful girl I've ever seen!"



**CAUTION**—See the name "Fox" on the metal discs (right and left) attached to every genuine pair of Fox's New Non-Fray Spiral Puttees.

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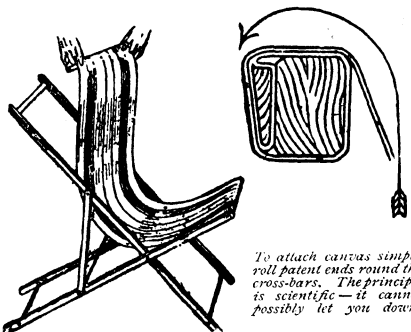
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I stared.

"A girl? Then why this nonsense about angels?"

James proceeded to explain.

"I was standing outside the thirteenth hole—the thirteenth hole, you frightful ass, is the club-house. Got that? Everybody knows the club-house is called the thirteenth hole," he added severely.

"Unlucky number," I said brightly.

James took no notice of my interruption.

"I'd been waiting for some few minutes when, hearing hasty footsteps, I turned, expecting to see Jones, who had promised to go round with me. Instead of Jones it was an—an—I mean a girl.

"We collided and she dropped her clubs. I picked them up, and noticed that she was very pretty. She was awfully nice about it, thanked me, and hoped my foot was not damaged, and then she disappeared. She looked awfully cute in a sort of jumper arrangement and a tam-o'-shanter," he added.

I nodded wisely, and there was silence for a few minutes.

"More tea?" I said. "Or shall we push off?"

Instead of answering, James leaned back and, lighting a cigarette, gazed mournfully at the ceiling.

"I wonder who she is?" he murmured.

I grunted.

"Have you finished? Oh, that girl of yours! Probably a vicar's daughter. They run to tam-o'-shanters and alleged golf. By the way, my wife's sister is coming over to-night. She's quite a kid, you know—'bout nineteen or twenty—and not a bad sort when she forgets the belle of the district pose. All the young asses tumble over each other to talk to her, and book dances and that sort of rot."

I broke off, as James was obviously dreaming.

"I'll have some more tea while you finish your reverie. Don't hurry."

James was looking at something by the door. His eyes were alert now as he leaned over and gripped my arm.

"Look, Billy! The same girl! By the window. Do you know her?"

I looked up lazily and met the eyes of the girl seated under the window. She beckoned in response to my nod.

I smiled at James. "That is my sister-in-law."

He jumped to his feet.

"No hurry," I murmured. "You will meet to-night. Well, if you insist—" I arose reluctantly.

"James," I said, as we left our table, "you rush in where wise men merely nod. Let this be a lesson. I hate to mention it, but my sister-in-law has a positive mania for fancy pastries, and—er—as a matter of fact, I shall have the honour of footing her bill."

I presented James, and a moment later his divinity slipped a piece of paper into my hand.

"Good old Billy!" she said over her shoulder, as James led her out to the car.

"Dear old Marjorie!" I murmured, glancing at her bill.

"It is rather jolly having someone like Billy to take care of one, don't you think?" said Marjorie, as I started the car.

"He's not a bad old sort," acknowledged James.

"Home, Thunder," I said. Then, twisting in my seat: "Do you think one may safely scorch with an angel aboard?"

Marjorie lifted her eyebrows.

James blushed a rosy red.



ON the first Sunday of their visit to a married son in a country town, where he had lately taken a nice house, an elderly couple duly attended matins at the parish church. Some of the music was familiar, and the visiting pair con-



A CATCH IN IT.

APPLICANT FOR SITUATION: And if I came, sir, what could I work up to in time?

SHOPKEEPER: Anything, my lad, anything. If you prove industrious and willing, the possibilities are boundless. You might even become a man like myself.

APPLICANT: Please, sir, I'd rather not come.

tributed heavily, with the credit for volume in favour of the father.

The praise of the good couple was not always in correct time, and sometimes in discord, but they did not notice the glowering looks of neighbouring worshippers or the flushed face of their devoted son.

"Father," observed the son that afternoon, while his mother was taking her accustomed nap, "at our church the congregation does very little singing; it is left chiefly to the choir."

"I know, my boy," said the old gentleman, as he affectionately placed a hand on his son's shoulder, "that it was very embarrassing to you this morning, but if I hadn't sung as loudly as I did, the people would have heard your mother."



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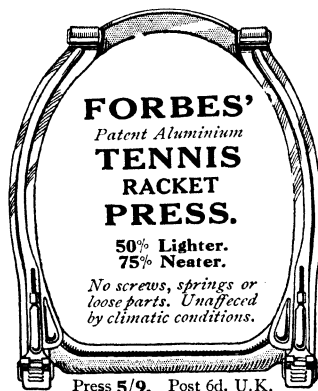


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FAIRY PRINCE.

I dreamed of a blue-eyed fairy prince,  
Handsome and young and gay;  
He was brave and strong as all princes are,  
And perfect in every way.  
And I dreamed of a palace in fairyland,  
With the blue skies ever above;  
And I walked on air, and I knew no care—  
For I was in love with Love.

And you, with your dear old dreamy eyes,  
And your dear old silly ways,  
And your stupid, matter-of-fact ideas,  
And your dull, hard-working days—

SMALL BOY : I'm Conservative !  
SMALL GIRL : I'm Labour !  
MOTHER : Why are you Labour, dear ?  
SMALL GIRL : Because I help you with the  
dusting sometimes.



TEA TROUBLES.

According to a medical expert, nearly all the irritable  
tempers which spoil family life result from consuming  
large quantities of tea.

If your husband commences at breakfast to shout,  
And vows that the bacon is tough,



TACT.

WIFE : Did you tell Cook that the custard was burnt ?

HUSBAND : Er—not exactly, dear. I said it was just right, but that we preferred it a trifle underdone !

What do *you* know of my fairyland,  
And my prince with the eyes of blue ?  
Ah, the night has fled, and the dream is sped,  
And I am in love with—you !

Hilda B. Coombs.



"I DON'T see," began an argumentative local politician, "why, if our Member of Parliament is as unpopular and generally obnoxious to everybody as the newspapers say he is, he gets his own way so often in the House."

Then the Member for a neighbouring constituency explained.

"Suppose," said he, "you were a business man having imperative business to attend to, and a man came in and sat down next to you and began to file a saw—wouldn't you give him what he wanted ?"

Or seizes the dishes and hurls them about,  
You must not retire in a huff.  
For the reason is clear why you cannot agree—  
You've both been indulging too freely in tea.

When father returns from his toll up in Town,  
And happens to trip on the mat,  
Then throws himself into a chair with a frown,  
And pitches his boots at the cat,  
It's merely a sign he's been making too free  
With the cup that is cheering at afternoon tea.

If to folks in a film play this test we extend,  
And note the remarkable way,  
On the slightest excuse, they go off the deep end,  
And pull at revolvers to slay,  
The sub-title terse on the screen should be "Gee !  
These guys are too fresh—they've been mopping  
up tea."

R. H. Roberts.



THE MAY 1924  
WINDSOR



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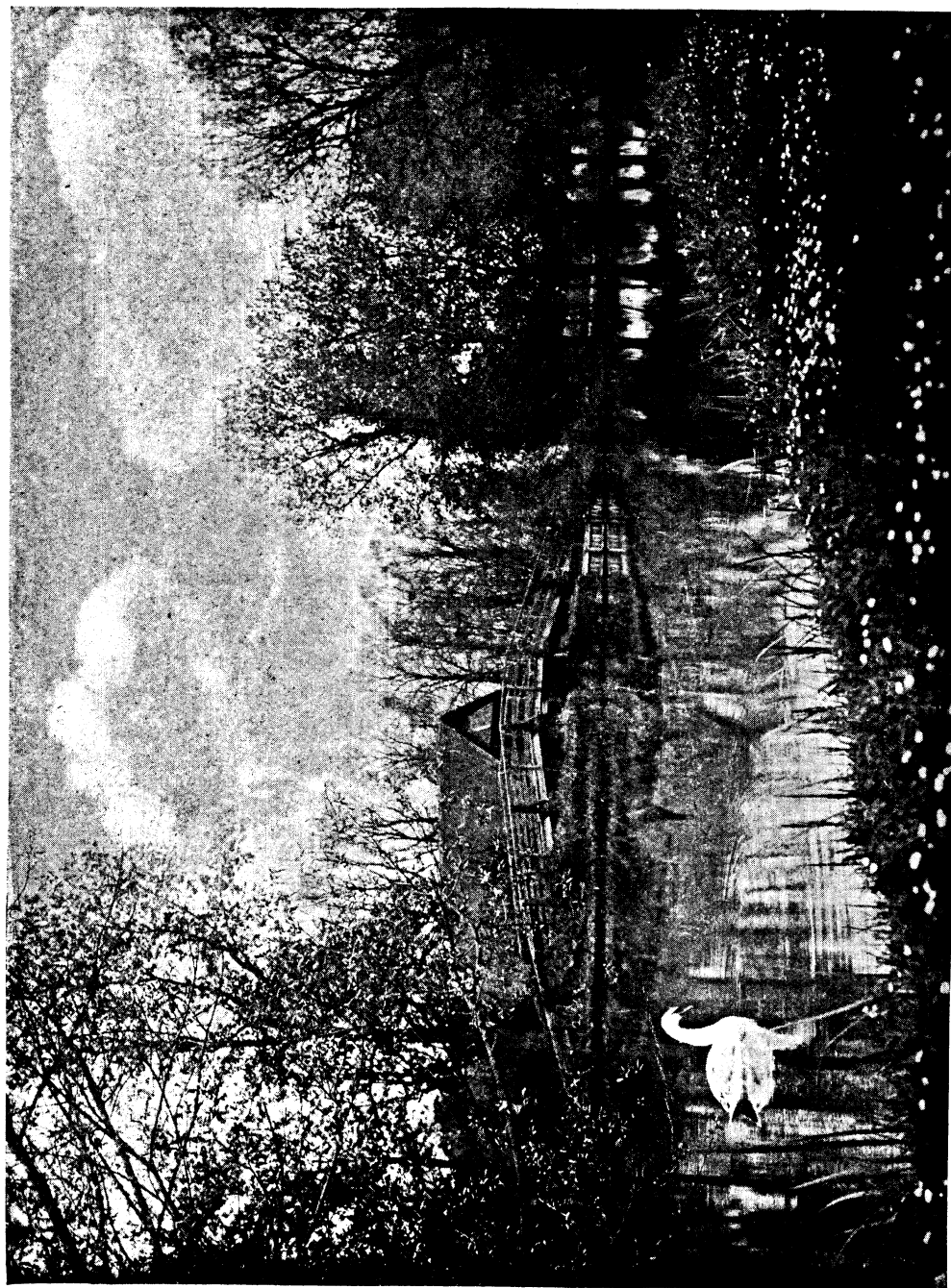
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## Mackintosh's SAMPLER CHOCOLATES



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THE THAMES AT HURLEY. A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY PERCY G. LUCK.



"'Noblesse oblige,' wailed the girl."

# NOBLESSE OBLIGE

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "*Valerie French*," "*Berry and Co.*," "*Jonah and Co.*," "*Anthony Lyveden*,"  
 "*The Brother of Daphne*," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

NICHOLAS JOHN KILMUIR, Duke of Culloden, turned his letter about. Presently he fell into a reverie.

He was a quiet, good-looking man, a short thirty-six years old. As luck would have it, he looked an aristocrat and, perhaps because of this, was seldom recognised. His features were fine and clean-cut, his shoulders square, his head well set on. He was tall, moved perfectly, rode as though he were part of his horse. His gentle brown eyes and pleasant voice—above all, his steady, grave smile made many friends. In France his men had revered him as a god. His tenantry did not reverence him, because reverence was not among their faculties, but the bluntest crofter would have died for him as a matter of course. Culloden understood this devotion and valued it as it deserved.

He spent ten months of the year at Ruth Castle and full four-fifths of his income upon his estate. And since in this world much is expected of a duke the remaining fifth had to be gingerly expended. Thanks to his loyalty to his own, Culloden was a comparatively poor man. He could not, for instance, afford to keep a car. . . .

At the present moment he was rather awkwardly placed.

His operation had been an expensive business. To judge by the surgeon's fee-book, dukes' appendices were twice as refractory as those of commoners. Again, his bill at the nursing-home had been worthy of his rank. More. He was to have convalesced upon an old friend's steam-yacht: then at the last moment his host

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had fallen sick and the cruise had been cancelled.

Staying at his club in St. James's, Culloden, who was really hard up and had been medically forbidden to return to the isolation of Ruth for at least six weeks, did not know what to do.

It is not surprising that an invitation which in the ordinary way he would not have cared to accept seemed to have fallen from heaven. . . .

c/o Comte Boschetto,

Chateau Chiennile,  
Cannes.

Dear Nick,

I know it's not your practice to batten on people you've never seen in your life, but I really think for once you'll have to climb down. My dear fellow, you MUST. You're going spare: to judge by your blasphemous incoherence, the weather in England is foul: the vacuum within you demands consolation in the shape of complete relaxation appropriately leavened with nice, gentle exercise. Very well, then. Join me.

Listen.

The Boschettos are mad to have you, of course, but don't let that stop you. They mayn't be pre-war, but they're insanely kind. Their one idea is to do their guests about fifteen times as well as they've ever been done before—in an inoffensive way. What's more, they actually bring it off.

First, they leave you alone. We make up our own parties, go as we please. I get up when I like. I retire when I like. I eat and drink what I like when I like. I do what I like. I come and go as I happen to feel inclined. In fact, so long as you sleep in, they don't care what you do if only you're happy. I'm one of the few who make a point of seeing the Countess about every other day just to tell her how much I'm enjoying myself, whereupon she almost weeps upon my neck and wails that there are always sandwiches and champagne in the salon bleu from eleven a.m. on, but that if I prefer port I've only to ask for it.

Secondly, I thought I knew a thing or two about the contents of the top-drawer, but I didn't. My son, I'm a blinkin' tenderfoot. *Luxury*? I tell you, before I came here I couldn't spell the word. Of course the chateau's palatial—you never saw such a place. Over thirty bathrooms. My bedroom faces south and is about forty feet square. Fifteen cars all going all day long and half the night, and the stables full of ripping good ponies and hacks. Three motor-boats. As for the servants, I didn't know there were so many in France. They literally swarm. I have a valet to myself,

and so, I believe, has everyone. And the women have maids. Two private bands—three, I think. Dancing all night—if you like. If I want a car or a cocktail or a Corona or any imaginable thing, I just call the nearest wallah, and there it is. Heaven knows what it all costs—I should think about two thousand a day—pounds, not francs, pounds. But apparently that doesn't matter. I tell you, it's indescribable. . . .

Hospitality like this seems to be proof against abuse. Short of larceny, you can't abuse it. Your duty towards your hostess and your duty towards yourself are synonymous terms. The most dutiful guest is the most self-indulgent. Naturally, such an establishment has attracted a motley crowd: still, there are no flagrant undesirables, and most of us mean well. Bertram Scarlet has just left—amid lamentations. The Pemburys are coming. So you see. . . .

I play golf all day, have a rubber of bridge before dinner—small tables, of course—and do a little dancing afterwards. Eleven o'clock usually sees me out. I ran into the Fairies the other day on the links, and after a lot of bickering persuaded them to come along after dinner. They and Bertram and I and one or two others made up our own party and had a good evening. When they said 'Good-night' to the Countess, she thanked them effusively for coming and begged them to leave the Carlton and stay here instead. She'd no idea who they were. They left dazedly in a Hispano limousine with two chauffeurs, wondering whether it was all a dream. I tell you, the whole thing is incredible—has to be seen to be believed.

So COME.

Yours,

Teddy Manderville.

Culloden lowered the letter and gazed into the street.

It did seem an obvious way out. But for his title, he would not have thought twice . . . but for his title.

The man could not endure to traffic with his name. In spite of golden opportunities, he was not a director of a single company: and, as he steadfastly refused to rent his style, so he declined to exchange it for board and lodging. If he was invited for himself, he was delighted to accept; but every new invitation was carefully weighed, and nine out of ten of them were found wanting. He need not have spent ten months of the year at Ruth Castle. In point of fact, had he pleased, he need

not have spent ten days of the year at home. Bachelor dukes are apt to be in demand. . . .

The present offer of hospitality was slightly different. It seemed that commoners were welcome—not so welcome, of course. ‘They’re mad to have you.’ Still, Bertram Scarlet and the Fairies—Teddy Mandeville himself seemed to be *personæ græte* at Chiennile. Besides, no one, apparently, was wanted for himself. The Boschettos were purely beneficent. All was fish that came to their net. All they were wanting was a thundering catch. If this included turtle, so much the better: but that was all.

There was no doubt about it. Not to avail himself of such a timely chance would be the act of a fool.

He wired to Mandeville that night.

*Seriously shall I arrive on Monday next?*

In due season he received a reply—

*Every time.*

\* \* \* \*

Monsieur Auguste Labotte adjusted his tie. Then he slid elegantly into the pink dress-coat which the servant was holding, told the man offensively to be gone, and assumed a courtly pose before the pier-glass. After a careful survey of his points, he clicked his heels, bowed low, took on a jaunty air and, clasping an imaginary partner, proceeded to shake his shoulders with every circumstance of abandon. . . .

He was in the act of kissing his finger-tips—a delicious, careless gesture, by which the fragrant caress was apparently tossed into the air to wreak who knows what havoc, when he observed that the symmetry of his eyebrows left something to be desired. Simultaneously he remembered that his aggrandisement of the left had been interrupted and never resumed. He repaired the omission delicately. . . .

Again he reverted to the pier-glass, to be inspected.

This time his scrutiny could find no fault in him.

Here was Chivalry *allegro*. The rude paraphernalia of virility had been doffed: the hardy victor of the field was turning to tenderer, more luscious conquests.

With a happy sigh, Labotte reflected that, disguise it as he would, his sportsmanship emerged always. No one could miss it. If anyone did—well, that was what the pink coat was for.

He opened the door of his room and descended thoughtfully. . . .

The *salon rose* was crowded.

Two pretty Englishwomen were sitting on the club-kerb, sipping cocktails and exchanging back-chat with a handsome, jolly-eyed Frenchman and a tall Italian, whose manner suggested that he might adorn diplomacy. As a matter of fact, he had. A Frenchwoman of great beauty was relating her impressions of the Trooping of the Colour and lending both English and ceremony a peculiar charm. Two Englishmen, soldiers, were listening delightedly. A jovial, broad-shouldered Spaniard was vividly recounting his prowess upon the tennis-court and throwing his hearers into convulsions of mirth. A well-set-up Frenchman, one-armed, was lighting a cigarette: this belonged to an Italian lady: between the two of them the simple attention put on the courtly livery of a forgotten age. A tall American girl, with grave grey eyes and a proud mouth, was standing close to an alcove. A common, unhealthy-looking youth, with a loose lip and an aggressive stare, was expelling smoke from his nostrils and languidly conversing with Count Boschetto, a stout, nervous little man with vacant eyes and an everlasting smile. The latter was most deferential and was working extremely hard. Six or eight other guests were about their striving host, listening greedily to the youth and thrusting toothsome banalities into the discussion, as though in the hope of attracting attention to themselves. From the alcove, heaving with emotion, the Countess was surveying the scene with a beatific smile. Her proportions were immense: her splendour, barbaric. Her snow-white hair was almost hidden beneath an enormous tiara, while the size and number of the pearls about her neck were almost frightening. Bracelets flashed upon her tremendous arms: rings winked from every finger. Her dress was of purple and gold. Her shoes were of gold, with high, purple heels.

The Duke of Culloden stood beside her, addressing her quietly from time to time. She whimpered irrelevant replies, sometimes tremulously voicing her thoughts. “Oll my guess-s-s,” she would falter. “Oll my deer guess-s-s. They were so naize to make vull my salons—the salons of an ole daungkil as me.”

It was pathetic.

Culloden felt as once he had felt in an asylum, watching a mad architect gleefully supervising the construction of a new wing. The poor wretch was intoxicated with his own importance, and the bricklayers

were calling him 'Sir' and laughing until the tears rolled down their cheeks.

The peer felt suddenly ashamed. He was subscribing to this tragic pantomime, taking advantage of an idiot's whim. He was——

Another picture rose up before his eyes. He saw the halls deserted, the ballrooms empty . . . saw his host and hostess sitting in melancholy state, the servants idle, yawning, kicking their heels . . . heard the bands droning music to which no feet danced . . . perceived with a shock the awful dreariness of riches with none to gather them.

Culloden decided that the woman beside him was no fool. It was her glory to kill the fatted calf. She was labouring under no delusion. She knew. She actually thanked her guests, begged them to batten upon her, meant what she said.

After all, his visit was neither more nor less than a happy deal. It suited the Countess's book, and it suited his. What he found especially pleasant was that for once in a way his title was cutting no ice. He was not being named: no one was being introduced. Teddy Mandeville was perfectly right—they really left him alone. He might have been Albert Binks, of High Street, Clapham.

He had arrived at Chiennile that Tuesday afternoon—a day later than he had said, but that was because there had raged a storm in the Channel and the present expediency of humouring his stomach had been impressed upon him. Upon arrival he had found that Mandeville had left the chateau. It seemed that the latter had been wired for on Sunday night. His Grace considered, frowning, that, even if he could not advise, Teddy might at least have left him a note. However . . .

A major-domo had received him and had shown him his rooms. It was clear that, for all his respect, the man had had no idea that he was not conducting a commoner. Culloden was faintly surprised and immensely relieved. The last thing he wanted was the carpet down. Still, it was curious. None of the servants knew. Yet—— 'They're mad to have you.' Possibly Teddy had paved this admirable way. . . .

Labotte entered the room.

For a moment he stood, looking round. Then he joined the circle about Boschetto.

He at once perceived that the latter was doing his best to please and decided to exploit the endeavour. He therefore

directed attention to the poor labourer by laughing and nudging his neighbours and presently mimicking the manner of his host.

"Yess, yess," cried Boschetto, by way of hearty agreement with the unpleasant youth's remarks.

"Yess, yess," echoed Labotte, grinning.

"Yess, yess," repeated Boschetto unconsciously.

"We 'af no bananas," said Labotte.

His host flushed painfully, endeavouring to contribute to the laughter in which his loose-lipped patron joined.

"You know," continued Labotte, taking the stage and indicating his host, "e says to me one day 'Labotte, I 'af feer I am dull. I weesh that I could mague my guess-s laugh.' An' I say to 'im 'My frien', you do this more better than you know.' " There was a shriek of laughter. Labotte looked round grinning. "Am I not right—yes?"

Boschetto fell away, chuckling in a queer, strained way, while Labotte engaged the youth in a discussion of the gaieties of town.

Culloden stepped to Boschetto and began to admire the room.

"Indeed, it's all so admirable. Not only the chateau, but the establishment. It's a privilege to be here. You think of everything. I tell you, Count, I know some people in England who think they can entertain, but if they could see this they'd go and jump off somewhere. Why are you so kind to us all?"

The Count blinked at him.

"Thank you," he said tremulously. "Thank you."

The American girl was speaking.

"To-day," she said, "he took me for such a lovely drive, didn't you, Count?"

Her host drew himself up.

"I 'af enjoy every minute," he said most earnestly.

The girl appealed to Culloden.

"You see?" she said. "He won't let anyone thank him. He gives us all the very time of our lives——"

"I am dull," said Boschetto.

The girl took his arm.

"What awful rot," she said. She turned to Culloden. "You ought to hear him on Europe. I wonder how many people in this room——"

"Yes, but you was an angel," said Boschetto gravely.

He glanced at his watch, begged to be excused and made his way to a servant with an anxious air. . . .

"Who," said Culloden, "are the young chevaliers?"

The girl smiled.

"The one in pink," she said, "is Monsieur Labotte—a man, as you have seen, of singular taste and charm. The other—well, surely you know who that is."

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Aren't you English?"

"I'm a Scotsman."

"Worse and worse," laughed the girl. "My good sir, that is the Duke of Culloden."

\* \* \* \* \*

Two days and two hours had gone by, and Nicholas John Kilmuir was enjoying himself very much.

He was royally lodged, admirably served, superbly fed. What was still more to his taste, he went incognito. 'Incognito'? No one had the remotest idea who he was—except that he was *not* the Duke of Culloden. To turn to smaller mercies, the weather was brilliant, and his time was his own. Moreover, his conscience was clear—when ever Boschetto saw him, a pleased light crept into the dull, strained eyes. . . .

But that was not nearly all.

First, there was the spectacle of an impostor, whose arrival on Monday had been taken for that of His Grace, deliberately exploiting the error, accepting the fervent homage of a perfectly poisonous crowd and generally playing such 'tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep.'

Secondly, there was Susan Armitage Crail. . . .

"I should like," said Nicholas John, "to ask you to dance. But a recent bereavement. . . ."

Miss Crail raised her sweet eyebrows.

"I've heard some excuses," she bubbled, "but that's the very best. It suggests fine shades of mourning of which the average relit never dreams."

"He wasn't a relation," said Nicholas. "Only a—an intimate connection. And I'm not really mourning. We got on admirably for many years, and then at the last he got above himself. Indeed, he caused me much pain, before—before he . . . passed over."

Miss Crail frowned.

"Why not 'died'?" she demanded.

"Don't say you're——"

"Can appendices die?" said Nicholas.

Susan Crail stared and then fell into silvery laughter.

Kilmuir regarded her gravely.

There was about this girl a natural dignity which no manner of mirth could subvert. The pride of her red mouth was gone: the grave grey eyes were fairly adance with merriment: she was unconscious of anything save that she was amused. Yet—hers was the amusement of a great lady. And of such was her charm. More. The girl had depth, quality: she did not require to be amused. There seemed to be things other than dalliance which were dreamt of in her philosophy.

"What should I do without you?" said Nicholas John.

"I expect you'd play Bridge," said Susan.

The man shook his head.

"I suppose I should read," he said. "I've nothing in common here with anyone else."

"You haven't tried," said Susan. "That little French girl with the glorious mop of hair. . . ."

"Can you see me?" said Nicholas John. "Do we look as if we should get on? I tell you I can't, er, chatter. I'd like to tell you what beautiful arms you've got, but I can't put it into words."

"Hush," said Susan. "You mustn't say things like that."

"Why?"

Steadily grey eyes met brown.

"Because they ring true. I know now that you think I have beautiful arms. I haven't, but that's beside the point. I know you think I have. If anyone else said so, I should know they were telling the tale. But you—you mean what you say."

"I hope so. But that's no reason. Why shouldn't I——"

"I don't know. It's difficult to say. Somehow it's—it's dangerous ground. You see, to-day a man can say anything—at least, they do. I hate it, but it's the fashion . . . anything. But there's always a button on the foil. They don't mean a word of it. If they did . . . Well, I should take the veil. But they don't. And that's the saving clause in an odious document. But you're different. You mean what you say. Your foil hasn't got any button. And so—it's dangerous."

Kilmuir digested this, frowning.

"In a word," he said, "I mustn't make personal remarks?"

"That's right," said Susan. With a sudden, childish gesture she touched his arm. "You don't mind my telling you?" she said.



The sweet simplicity of heart that prompted gesture and word took Kilmuir by the throat. She was a child—this great lady, an exquisite, unspoiled child. Gentle, fair, wise—smothering up her nature because it was not safe for her nature to be abroad. His impulse was to take her hand and kiss it. He wanted to, immensely. But he mustn't—because she was a child.

In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, their positions had been reversed. A

moment ago he had been sitting at her feet. Now her hand was in his, and she was looking up trustfully into his eyes. She was a child.

"No," he said, "I don't. In fact, I'm much obliged. Let's—let's shake hands, shall we?"



"Other guests were about their striving host, listening greedily to the youth."

They shook hands gravely.

Locked together, two couples rocketed out of the ballroom, whirled past Miss Crail and Kilmuir and, as the tune ended, crashed in a heap on a divan. They sorted themselves uproariously.

"What about a little courage?" said 'the Duke,' drying his neck. "And a mouthful of goose-grease just to help it down?"

"Are you steel so thirsty?" queried his partner.

"I am when I look at you," was the ducal reply.

Labotte suspended his handkerchief as a curtain between the two girls, as though to

screen the speakers from inconvenient gaze. To do this, he passed his arms upon either side of his partner. The latter, an English girl, sought to duck beneath his sleeve. Instantly he lowered his arm. In a moment the screen was forgotten, and the business became an affray between the Gallant and the Fair.

"See, see," cried Labotte, grinning. "I af caught a leedle mouze in a gage. She will get oud, but she does not know 'ow." The girl slid to the ground, and her captor slid with her. "You see?" he announced. "It ees no good at oll. You are a preesner for life."

The pretty scene concluded with a violent



"A tall American girl, with grave grey eyes and a proud mouth."

"Oll my deer guess-s-s They were so naize to make vull my salons."

struggle which occasioned shrieks of laughter. The four departed hilariously in search of champagne. . . .

"D'you like all this?" said Nicholas. "I don't mean the scene we've just witnessed, but the manners of which it's the fruit."

"What d'you think?" said Miss Crail.

"I think you hate it. I think you like gaiety, and as this is the only sort going you make the best of it."

"You're wrong," said the girl. "I could live on a desert island and be completely happy."

"Then why do you stay here?"

"Well, for one thing, I haven't an island. Secondly, I haven't any money. I live with an aunt, who keeps me and is at present on a yacht. When I saw the passenger-list, I begged to be excused. So I've been left here till she returns. If I'd the nerve, I'd strike out a line for myself, but I've always lived soft and I can't type a letter, so what can I do?"

Kilmuir regarded the end of his cigarette.

"How long have you done this?" he said.

"Nearly two years now. The idea is to get me married and out of the way. But I don't go very well. Two or three men have been kind enough to bid, but . . . ." She shuddered. "My aunt says it's my fault," she added, "and so it is. I don't push my wares . . . I'm not so bad as I was. At one time I was quite hopeless. But I'm better now. At least I give people a chance—to be nice or nasty according to how they feel. I'm afraid even now I'm not very good at horse-play, but I shall probably learn."

"Don't," cried Nicholas. "Don't."

The girl looked at him.

"All right," she said, "I won't. I promise I won't again. I don't know why I did. Yes, I do," she added abruptly. "I know why I did."

"Why?" said Kilmuir.

Susan Crail started.

Then, suddenly, she fell into long, strained laughter.

"From your curious tone," she said, "I perceive that I have been maudlin. You know. Not offensively blind, but sorry for myself. It's just that extra half-glass, you know. You think 'I won't drink it,' and then you get talking and——"

"Rot," said Nicholas John.

"Oh, but how rude," said Susan. "Never mind. You'll believe me one day. Didn't I talk about a desert island? Yes, I thought

so. I always do. But I'll bet you never said what the last man said. You're much too solemn."

"What did he say?"

"He said it wouldn't be a desert island long, especially if I went in for goatskin shorts."

"My very words," said Kilmuir steadily.

There was a long silence.

Susan was beaten and she knew it.

Hastily she shuffled her cards. These were frightening.

Without thinking, she had told him her story because she valued his esteem. She valued his esteem because she loved him. She had told him her plight and, without thinking, she had told him its remedy—*marriage*. She had actually rammed it home—without thinking. Suddenly she had realised. . . .

Horried at what she had done, she had striven frenziedly to undo it. . . . somehow—*anyhow* . . . no matter at what cost. And he had watched her efforts and fainted and knocked them out.

There was nothing for it: she must begin again.

"I shall pinch you in a minute," she said.

"I tell you, the reaction has set in. The muzzy feeling is passing and I'm beginning to feel ready for anything. Don't say I didn't warn you."

Labotte arrived—a very *deus ex machina*.

He came straight to the two, stood before Susan, spread out anticipative hands and began to oscillate to the one-step which had just commenced. An impudence of raised eyebrows and the shadow of a superior grin argued a confident familiarity which could afford to dispense with a formal invitation to dance.

With a heart of lead, Miss Crail acceded brightly to the unspoken request.

As she launched herself, she flung out the words of the melody in the approved darkie fashion.

*And you never know whether she will,  
And you never know whether you may,  
But hold her tight,  
With all your might,  
By the small of her back,  
On a moonlit night,  
And you won't be left, 'cause you must be  
right—*

*THOWAT-T-T'S the way!*

They flashed the short length of the salon, whirled through the open doors and disappeared. . . .

There is an old saying that you cannot

have it both ways. If you decide to discourage heaven, then you must be prepared to encourage hell. Whether or no Susan had offended Kilmuir, she had exalted Labotte—a supererogatory and rather dangerous elevation.

He began to improve the occasion almost at once.

"I do not know why I 'af not resgue you more soon. I think I am a gread fool. There is the nices' leedle 'orse in oll the place sidding with a gread dull fellow an' I 'af lose my dime in tryin' to school so many mules. *Tant pis!* I tell you, we are goin' to 'af a good dime now. We are goin' to go well this evenin'—my naize leedle 'orse an' I."

His buoyant tenderness was hideous, but Kilmuir was standing in the doorway, and they were dancing towards him.

Susan threw back her head and laughed wildly.

"Your horse?"

Labotte tightened his hold.

"From the fir'st dime I 'af see you, you 'af been my naize leedle 'orse. Bud olways before, you 'af been shy from me. 'Ah,' I 'af say, 'but thad is a good fault.' You know, a man like much bedder when a girl is not oll over 'im at once. An' so I say 'Gently, my friend, tread gently your naize leedle 'orse: an' one day she shall winny when she shall 'ear your face——'"

"And eat out of your hand?"

It is doubtful whether the sage heard what she said.

Intoxicated with the triumph of his compelling personality, dazzled by the richness of the pasture his brilliancy had won, considerably affected by the elegance with which his imagery had betrayed at once the sportsman, master and swain, Labotte was out of earshot.

He whirled her past Nicholas in an eloquent dithyramb of motion to which she deliberately subscribed.

"My naize leedle 'orse," he crooned, "oll while I 'af make spord with the mules I 'af see olways my leedle 'orse in the dail of my eye. An' ad nighd I 'af dream about 'er, an' now . . . 'Af I not say that we shall go well this evening? Eh? An' do we not? Eh? Was I nod righd, then, sweet-bit?"

Craning his neck, he leered into her eyes.

As they swung round, Susan was able to see that the doorway was empty. Kilmuir had gone.

"Let's stop," she said, suiting the action to the word.

Labotte wagged his head.

"I know a leedle salon," he chanted rhythmically, "'alfway on the stairs."

As the girl turned, he laid hands upon her. It was his way. The suggestion of an embrace appealed to him. For one thing, it looked so well. It argued a certain proprietorship—a seignory, such as other men did not enjoy: it suggested the existence of a familiarity which, short of a scene, his victim could seldom rebut: it enhanced his reputation as an irresistible dog.

He slid an arm about her shoulders and squeezed her hand, as though by way of shepherding her in the required direction.

"D'you mind not touching me?" said Susan.

Labotte started, and the greasy hands fell away.

Then he rapped his knuckles.

"Ah, then," he simpered, "you mus' be more gareful, block-face. You mus' nod go to frighden your leedle 'orse."

Susan passed out of a door and sat down in the hall. This was empty, but it was not remote.

Labotte stared

"Bud," he blurted, "we 'af arrange to go——"

"I sit here," said Susan.

Labotte sat down by her side and took out a cigarette. His grin had faded into a supercilious and rather unpleasant regard which sat uneasily upon his insignificant face.

"And," continued Miss Crail, "I'd be glad if you wouldn't refer to me as 'your little horse.' It suggests an intimacy which does not exist between us: it's vulgar and it's bad form. I don't suppose that any of those reasons will appeal to you, but you can take my word for it they're pretty sound."

Labotte regarded her open-mouthed.

After a moment the blood began to pour into his face. Very soon this was completely suffused and glistening. The scarlet of his ears suggested that they were on fire. As for his eyes, these had become small slits of grey-green flame.

He shut his mouth with a snap.

"What?" he breathed, through his teeth. "I—I am vulgar?"

"Intensely vulgar," said Susan, producing a cigarette. "Get me a match."

For a second Labotte hesitated.

Then he rose, crossed to a table, and returned with a box of matches.

"Thank you," said Miss Crail. "Now you can go."

Labotte drew himself up.

"I 'af nod the use to be commanded," he said. "I am a gennelman, an'——"

"Don't be silly," said Susan. "Because it suited me to dance with you, that doesn't make you a gentleman. And now, if you take my advice, you'll run away and play—while there is time. Otherwise, I may be tempted to put you where you belong."

The macaroni appeared to have lost the power of speech.

His world was rocking before him.

A woman—a fury, of course—had had the hideous presumption to turn him down. His advances had been rejected: his condescension had been actually flung in his face: he had been offered gross, gratuitous insult. The dove he had deigned to nourish had turned serpent. The female he had demeaned himself to favour had turned and rent him—*him*, Labotte, knight and sportsman. . . .

The indecency of the affair made his brain reel.

Dazedly he put a hand to his head.

"No one 'as never speak to me so—nevare," he announced dramatically. "Eef you was a man——"

"Be thankful," said Miss Crail, "that I am not. Why, you wouldn't ride for weeks," she added pleasantly.

Labotte blanched. The reflection, however, that sex cannot be changed at will steadied him almost at once.

He took a pace backward and bowed.

"I go," he said stiffly, "but nod begauze you 'af say so. No." Susan began to shake with laughter. "The only reason wot I 'af got ees that I will blease myselve. Oh, yes. Eet ees very fine to laugh," he added violently. "It ees a gread jork to make slaps when you are very safe that they cannot be render: but eet ees you shall waid, Mees Crail, an' fin' whether you shall 'af make these blace too 'ott for you to 'old."

He turned and sauntered away with such nonchalance as he could muster.

When he was out of sight, Susan went to her room, sank into a chair, buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Upon the next floor Nicholas was pulling his moustache and covering his third mile upon an Aubusson carpet of great beauty.

Three rooms away Labotte was savaging a pillow.

"*Sapristi!*" he mouthed. "*Mais je vous*

*montreraï, Speet-smoke, qu'on ne gagne rien à insulter un sportsman."*

\* \* \* \* \*

Nicholas very nearly returned to Town.

The man was shocked. At one and the same moment he had made two striking discoveries—severally harmless enough, but jointly corrosive. The first was that Susan Crail was a waster: the second, that he loved her very much. What made things infinitely worse was that, as women go, she was a queen. Spotted silk is so much worse than stained sackcloth. Unearthing more bitterness, he reflected that never again would he be offered the blessed opportunity of wooing without his title to promote his suit.

He avoided Susan, but watched her, taking care to conceal his disappointment and wearing it on his sleeve.

Susan could have wept, was careful to appear blithesome and got away with it.

Labotte was as good as his word.

His vanity had been outraged. Very well. All the chivalry of the man rose up in condemnation of the foul deed. His hate had to be served. After surveying his dirty armoury with a malevolent stare, he turned his attention to his opponent's harness.

Almost immediately he perceived a vulnerable spot.

Miss Crail was a lady, and ladies had an aversion to figuring in scenes. Indeed, to avoid a scene they would endure almost anything. . . .

Labotte licked his lips

If he approached her privately, he would be told to go away. Very well. Supposing he approached her publicly—short of a scene, she would have to submit to his approach. More. If he addressed her, *sat* by her side, made loud, innocent conversation—no one would see anything inconsistent with courtesy in that. Everybody would think that he was dancing attendance. But he and she would know that she was being whipped. . . .

Fortune favours the brute.

Five times in three days he contrived to sit next to her at meat: twice he had managed to be driven in the same car: seven times he had asked her to dance. She had not done so, but it was not too pleasant—this pestering. Labotte's attentions would have been odious at any time: now they were nothing less than a direct insult. When upon the third day at dinner he steered the conversation to the points of a 'naize leedle 'orse,' the latter felt cold with rage.

Most of the women saw there was something amiss, and, reluctantly respecting Susan, were faintly amused. The more quick-witted of the men began to smell trouble. The jolly-eyed Frenchman looked very hard at Labotte: the Spaniard had frowned and lost the thread of his discourse: the tall Italian had stared and then asked Susan to dance. But that was all. The way of a man with a maid had to be patently outrageous to warrant intervention. . . .

Deep in a shadowy corner of the *salon vert* Susan was contemplating her state and wondering, if she fled, how far four hundred and fifty francs would go.

Six feet away two Englishmen were talking.

For a moment or two she listened idly, too much depressed to care at all for their words.

Then her brain leapt.

"Sponge knows who he is."

"He would"—contemptuously.

"He didn't go so far as to claim his acquaintance, but he says he's Kilmuir of Kilsay. He added that he knew his wife intimately—spoke of her as 'Kitty Kilmuir.'"

"And I bet if she came here she wouldn't know him. What a sweep the man is!"

The two moved away, and the voices faded.

*His wife . . . Kitty Kilmuir.*

Wondering why she had assumed that Nicholas John Kilmuir was unmarried, halting curiously between relief and dismay, Susan started to her feet. . . .

Then she sank down again and stared at the floor.

Her impulse had been to find Kilmuir at once and tell him the truth. Not all of it, of course, but enough to make him her friend—a present help in her trouble. But Susan Crail was no fool. Life was a stern creditor. If she invoked the sympathy of the man she loved, touched his brown hand, called up the kindness of his steady brown eyes—these things would have to be paid for in blood and tears. As it was, even if Labotte vanished, she would still have to try to forget. . . . Nicholas Kilmuir. There was a scourge waiting. Was it worth her while, for the sake of a little relief, deliberately to load the cords? Wasn't it better to—

"No," said Susan suddenly. "It isn't better. What is better is to take what you can get. I can't take him, because somebody

else has done that. But I can be with him and see him and hear his blessed voice. What do I care what the future holds? The present's the thing."

She rose and stepped out of the shadow—almost into the arms of 'the Duke of Culloden' and Labotte.

The latter bowed low.

"Good evening, Mees Susan Crail."

"Good evening."

'His Grace' stared. Then—

"Oh, 'elp," he said. "Any more for the throne-room?" He bowed grotesquely. "Good sunset, sweeting. What doth the night-light say?"

"Too late," said Susan pleasantly. "I've a letter to write."

"Splendid," said 'the Duke.' "We'll tell you what to say, shall I?" He linked her arm in his and turned to Labotte. "If I'm not back in half-an-hour, Saddle-soap—"

Labotte raised his eyebrows.

"I do nod think," he announced, "you will be zo long." Suddenly his eyes gleamed. "But there," he added, "I do nod know. Perhaps . . . I tell you, when she was naize, she was vairy, vairy naize."

He closed his eyes and vented a happy sigh.

Susan felt rather sick.

"O-o-oh," said 'the Duke,' approaching a face which appeared to have been recently buttered. "And how does he know?"

"I don't think he does," said Susan, seeking to disengage herself. "Please let me go."

"And why was she 'vairy naize'?" continued 'the Duke,' detaining her.

"You'd better ask him," said Susan, trying to pass it off. "He seems to know. And now let me go, please. I've got this letter to write."

'His Grace' skipped to a doorway and spread out his arms.

"Block the other one, Saddle-soap: and we'll give her a run," he cried, and, with that, he switched off the lights.

Then curtain rings rasped, and, except for the rosiness of a dying fire, the room was black.

Susan stood paralysed.

She was going to be kissed, of course. That went without saying. She wondered dully whether she was going to be scratched. Labotte . . . Perhaps he would only pinch her.

With a shock she realised that she had better move. To stay where she was would

be fatal. If she could change her position . . .

With a beating heart, she began to steal to one side, straining her ears.

Suddenly she stood still as death.

Something—someone was almost touching her. She could hear his breathing. She was right under his hand. And she was trapped. Her knee was against a chair, and she could not move. Any second now . . .

The form sheered off. Whose-ever it was, he had missed her by a hair's breadth.

Trembling all over, Susan began to edge away from the chair. . .

A piercing scream of agony shattered the silence—the sort of scream which is associated with torture—the scream of a human being under the pain of hell.

Susan's heart stood still.

The scream slid into a flurry of howled oaths, the nature of which suggested that Labotte was out of action. If he was, there was a doorway clear. . .

Susan was there in a flash.

She and Kilmuir passed out together.

"Steady," he said quietly. "Now turn round, get behind me and appear to be looking in. Then they won't connect us with this little play."

As he parted the curtains, the lights in the room went up, and four or five guests and servants appeared in the other doorway.

Labotte was sitting on the parquet, rocking himself to and fro, nursing his bridle hand and addressing 'the Duke of Culloden,' who was leaning against a sofa convulsed with laughter.

"I tell you I 'af not see why jus' begozz you are duke that 'as nod give you the raighd to starm' to my 'and laike there was fifty tousan' dun of storns in your boode an' then you gannot bray bardon bud mus' laugh laike you gry an' make that you 'af nod starm' to no one's 'and. I suppose it is I wot 'af march oll over my own 'and—yess! Bah! I make myself to be your frien', I let you to call me Zaddle-zorp an' show you the rorpes of these place, an' then you starm' to my 'and and when I say 'See 'ow you 'af done' then there was a gread forny jork that I am 'urt. I tell you I do not gare ooze duke you are . . ."

By one consent Miss Crail and Nicholas turned and made their way out of the press.

"So perish all traitors," said the latter.

"As the actual executioner, my use of that pious expression is traditionally becoming."

Susan stared.

"You?"

Kilmuir nodded.

"I was there all the time," he said. "None of you saw me. I was wondering where I came in, when the lights went out. I happen to be able to see rather well in the dark, and just as I passed you I saw our little red-back making for where you stood on his hands and knees. . . I admit I'm not very proud of myself. I should have preferred to thrash him in daylight and a public place, but you—you had to be considered. . . I was going to harry the, er, Duke of Culloden also, but Saddle-soap made such a noise that I hadn't time. That he should credit his accomplice with the assault is sheer good fortune. I never dreamed of such an elegant *dénouement*." He led the way to a closet at the end of the *salon gris*. This was deserted. "And now, why did you rush upon your fate three days ago? Why did you try to discredit yourself in my eyes? We'd only just made friends."

"Did I succeed?"

"To a certain extent. Won't you sit down? That's right." He took his seat by her side. "I've changed my mind now."

"What d'you think now?"

"I think you wanted to put me off," said Nicholas. "And I want to know why."

"You remember what I told you—about my life?"

"Every word."

"Well, I spoke without thinking, you know. I don't know why. I've never done it before. And suddenly I realised that . . ."

"Yes?"

Susan hesitated. Then—

"I knew a woman once," she said, "who was always tied up for money. And she used to come to Aunt Beatrice. She never asked her right out, but she used to tell her the awful plight she was in and say if she couldn't get someone to lend her two hundred dollars she'd have to kill herself and—and look volumes. . . Well, it wasn't pretty."

"No," said Kilmuir. "But how does that apply?"

"I realised the other night that I'd done exactly the same—told you in so many words *how you could rescue me*. . . You see, I didn't know then that you were married. If the woman had come and told me how poor she was, it wouldn't have mattered, because I had nothing. But Aunt Beatrice had the means. In the same way, my telling you my plight doesn't matter now, because you can't help."

There was a long silence.

At length—

"Surely," said Nicholas gently, "you knew me better than that? Surely you needn't 've thought——"

"You're a man," said Susan. "You don't know how frightfully sensitive about marriage a woman can be. Many a girl's thrown away happiness rather than let a man even suspect—quite wrongly—that she's setting the pace."

"I'm inclined to think that still more have set the pace rather than run the risk of throwing away happiness."

Susan laughed.

"And, what's more," continued Kilmuir, "the latter have all my sympathy."

"Listen to the man," said Susan.

"Supposing," said Nicholas John, "I had been a bachelor. You naturally thought I was, because there are still men left who travel with their wives. I happen to have a good reason for not being one of them. Next time I go abroad I hope my wife will be with me. But that's by the way. Supposing I had been a bachelor and, as such, eligible—to pull you out of your slough. And supposing I'd decided that I loved you and had asked you to be my wife. . . . And supposing you'd thought it good enough. . . . D'you mean to say you'd 've actually turned me down?"

"Undoubtedly," said Susan.

"Why?"

"They call it," said Susan, "'self respect.' You might have sworn that you loved me, but I should have been terrified that it was only *Noblesse oblige*."

"Surely a woman can distinguish pity from love?"

"A wife could, because she'd be in a position to apply all sorts of tests. But that's not very much good. I mean, it's a bit late. . . ."

Kilmuir took out a cigarette.

"Three days ago," he said slowly, "you told me I meant what I said." Susan started. "That what I said rang true. Yet I might have sworn that I——"

"I know," said the girl desperately. "But the terror of making a mistake. . . ."

"Aren't you digging too deep?" said Nicholas. "If somebody offers me a drink and I feel thirsty, I jolly we'll take it. So long as it's honest liquor, I don't bother about their motives. If I assume anything, I assume that they wouldn't ask me if they didn't want me to have it."

"You're not going to compare marriage to a Martini?"

"They're much the same. A happy marriage is like a slap-up cocktail, the effect of which never passes off. . . . Well, if a man doesn't offer another a tenpenny drink unless he wants him to have it, d'you seriously think he's going to offer his heart, his home, his name, his fortune, his future to any daughter of Eve that ever was foaled—unless he wants her to have 'em?"

"Prosper Le Gai did."

"Only to save Isoult's neck. . . And, though she knew that, she took him. What's more, my lady, it was a great success."

Susan began to shake with laughter.

"That was an unfortunate instance, wasn't it?" she said. "You know, you're too well-read. I should have got away with that with most of the people I know."

"It's a question of Greeks meeting," said Nicholas John. "Or deeps calling. We've more or less the same tastes. I think you like the dawn and the silence of high places and the roar of the woods when the wind is laying on——"

"And the thud and suck of the surf and the baby talk of a brook and great cotton-wool clouds in the sky and a wind you can lean against. . . . Oh, I should think I do."

For a moment the girl was transfixed.

Sitting upright, her grave eyes shining, her lips parted and her sweet pretty head thrown back, she might have been some Nereid out of some Odyssey. His eyes ablaze, Kilmuir regarded her, fascinated. . . .

Then she lowered her head, and the light in her eyes died.

"But that sort of life's not for me," she said abstractedly.

"Look here," said Nicholas John. "D'you want that sort of life?"

"What d'you mean?"

"What I say—as usual," said Kilmuir. He waved his hand. "Would you like to wash all this out? Would you like to get down to Nature? Spend nine months of the year under her wing? Sell this mess for a birthright? Know the rain on your face, and——"

"Are you offering me a land-agent's job?"

The man looked at his finger-tips.

"It's more of a stewardship," he said. "There's a post at my place in Scotland which you could fill—most admirably. It's been vacant—oh, twenty years now, because I could never find the right person to take it on."

Susan put a hand to her head.



"It—it sounds like a fairy-tale," she said. "A girl-steward. . . . Of course, you're making this up—creating some sinecure out of compassion for me."

"No, I'm not," said Kilmuir. "The post's going. Quite a good house, and about—about six hundred a year. Fuel. I could have filled it, of course: but I didn't want someone who'd get fed up in a week. D'you think you could stick it? It's lonely up there—after this: and the dawn's a bit late in the winter, and—I've known it pretty cold."

"D'you think I'd mind that? But what d'you know of me? What makes you think I could manage? I don't even know myself. In fact, I'm sure I couldn't. I don't know what stewards do. I couldn't control and order—I'd try to learn, of course, and I'd simply love the life. I'm choked here—tied and cooped and sickened and choked. I hardly saw a city before I was twelve years old. I was born and bred up in Maine. My grandfather's place was there. . . ." She hesitated—then burst out suddenly. "Six years ago he died, and everything crashed. They sold my saddles and my very own mare with the others I used to ride. I couldn't prove she was mine, and if I could have I hadn't got any money to buy her corn. They sold the curtains I'd made to hang in my rooms and lamps and mirrors and pictures I'd saved up to buy. They sold everything—house, woods, farms, hills, valleys. . . . And I who'd been mistress of it all was sold, too. At least, I was put up for sale. But then you know that. . . . And all because my grandfather had forgotten to sign his will. . . . What was I saying? Oh, I know, Well, now you see why your fantasy dazzles me so. But don't let's talk about it any more. I know it's out of the question, and you know it too. Don't think I don't appreciate——"

"Why is it out of the question?"

"Oh, for a thousand reasons. I should have no opportunity. A woman——"

"I am obeyed—up there."

"I don't care. A woman can do many things, but she can't fill a post like that. You know you're only saying it out of pure——"

"I'm not," said Kilmuir steadily. "It's always been held by a woman. The last . . . died . . . twenty years ago." His voice became very soft. "She was the sweetest lady—with the gentlest smile. She never gave an order in all her blessed life, but I

think if she'd asked the waves to stop their fretting there would have been a calm. I've seen her tend a horse that the grooms were afraid to feed: I've seen wild birds on her shoulder; and once I saw a drunkard pour out his store of whisky on the ground before her eyes. I tell you the roughest fisherman hung upon her will. You see, she always understood. She never taught, yet everyone learned of her: she was so humble, yet she was found a queen. Her laugh—well, Eve may have laughed like that, before the apple. . . . And then . . . one day . . . she died. . . ." He took out a letter-case and discovered a photograph. Then he rose and stood in front of the girl. "For what it's worth, that's a picture of her."

Susan stared at the beautiful, eager face. . . .

A crazy truth, such as one finds in dreams, kept thrusting into her brain.

Sharply she flung up her head.

"Your mother?" she whispered.

Nicholas nodded.

"I want you to take her place. . . . You see, I'm—I'm not married, darling." Susan started violently, and the man set a hand on her shoulder. "I'm—I'm not that Kilmuir."

"O-o-oh!"

For a moment she stared at him wildly. Then she closed her eyes, let her head fall, and buried her face in her hands.

Nicholas continued steadily.

"It isn't much to offer—a share in my lonely life. But it won't be lonely any more if you'll accept it. I never thought I should marry. I never thought I'd find anyone I'd care to see in her place. And then . . . at last . . . I saw you. . . . And the moment I saw you, I knew. . . . I'm poor, you know, but if you'd been worth twenty millions, I'd've asked you to be my wife. You see, I love you, my lady; and so I can't help myself. I love your beautiful temples and the droop of your precious lips: I love your grave grey eyes and your sweet pretty ways. . . ." He hesitated. Then, "I warn you, I won't be able to give you much of a time. I can't even afford a car, Susan. At least, I haven't been able to yet. But I think, if we were careful, perhaps. . . ." He took her wrists and drew her hands from her face. She continued to hang her head. "Oh, my blessed lady, I want you so much: and, as you don't mind the cold and the quiet, don't you think you could——"

"*N'blesse oblige*," wailed the girl. "*Noblesse oblige*."

"Oh, you darling," cried Nicholas, lifting her to her feet.

Susan flung up her head and stared at the face of her squire three inches away.

With his arms about her, Nicholas smiled back.

"I confess," he said, "I'd 've liked to feel that you loved me, but I'd rather you took me out of pity than not at all."

A child put her hands on his shoulders.

"Do you really love me?" she whispered.

Nicholas smiled down.

"No," he said. "I'm doing it out of pity."

A radiant, mischievous look leapt into the child's grey eyes.

"I don't believe you," she said, and put up her mouth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ten glorious minutes had passed, and Susan and Nicholas were standing in the *salon bleu*, drinking each other's healths in rose-coloured Clicquot. Ten or twelve fellow-guests were hard by, flicking their several appetites with the same beverage. Among them, their recent difference adjusted, were 'the Duke of Culloden' and Labotte. The latter's hand was bandaged and reclining in a sling.

A servant entered with a card.

This he took directly to 'the Duke.'

The youth glanced at it and frowned.

"Say I'm not here," he said.

The servant bowed and turned away.

"Stop," said Nicholas John.

The servant hesitated, and a hush fell upon the room.

"Bring me that card."

With an apologetic glance at 'Culloden,' the fellow did as he was bid.

Nicholas picked up the card and read the name.

"Where is *Monsieur le Comte*?"

"*Monsieur le Comte est couché.*"

"*Et Madame*?"

"*Madame aussi, Monsieur.*"

"Then show this gentleman in."

"*Bien, Monsieur,*" said the man and made his escape. . . .

Amid an electric silence Nicholas picked up his glass and drank comfortably.

Susan was touching his arm.

"Nicholas! What are you doing?"

Her lover turned with a swift smile.

"I want him to meet you, lady."

"But——"

Labotte was before them, speaking acidly.

"Your frien' 'as nod seem to unnerstan'——"

"Address yourself to me," said Kilmuir.

Labotte stared. Then he looked Nicholas up and down.

"I am nod a servant," he said.

"No," said the other. "I knew that by your coat."

Labotte drew himself up.

"I do nod know 'oo you are," he said loftily, "an' I do nod gare, but eet ees good you shall know that in France when a gennelman 'as gommanded it was nod use to gommand the opposide in 'is faze. You 'af 'ear my frien' dell that 'e was nod to be seen an' then you mus' put your lornge nose to a thing which 'as not belong to you at oll an' make jus' the same business as my frien' 'as nod wand."

"And what," said Nicholas, "is it to do with you? Why don't you let him——  
Hullo, he's cleared."

Labotte swung round. Then he spread out his hands.

"Ov gourse 'e 'as gorn," he cried. "Eet ees you wot 'ave drive 'im away. 'E 'as say 'e is nod to be seen, an' then you mus' . . ."

Here a nice-looking man with a merry eye was ushered into the room.

As he stepped forward——

"Hullo, Berry," said Nicholas, taking his hand. "Nice of you to come up."

"Yes, isn't it touching?" said Berry.

Nicholas turned to Susan, staring, big-eyed.

"This, dear, is Major Pleydell—a very old friend. Berry, this is Susan—Miss Susan Crail. She's just promised to be my wife."

Berry Pleydell smiled. Then he took Susan's hand.

"My dear," he said, "this is most fortunate. You can do me a little service. Listen. When I was last at Ruth—about four years ago, I sent a good-looking pair of bed-socks to the Castle dairy. Well, I had to go before the wash came back, and in spite of repeated applications to His Grace the Duke of Culloden, my property has never been restored. Now, when you get there, go through his rotten things, and——"

"*The Duke of Culloden*?" cried Susan.

"But . . ." The sentence died there, and she looked from one to the other with fright in her eyes. Then she addressed her swain. "Are *you*," she breathed, "are *you* the Duke of Culloden?"

"Yes, dear," said Nicholas John.

To style the sensation 'profound' conveys nothing at all.

Susan felt rather faint. Her fellow-guests,

standing like drugged sheep, seemed to be bent upon at once avoiding one another's gaze and ascertaining one another's demeanour. Only their eyes shifted, their heads and bodies remaining perfectly still. As for Labotte, the consciousness that he had publicly insulted a Duke, harassed a future Duchess and for the last seven days conspicuously licked a rank impostor all over seemed to have affected his reason. He staggered to a doorway, collided with and ricocheted from the jamb, kicked the latter savagely, screamed and disappeared. . . .

Major Pleydell was speaking.

"But didn't you know?" he said.

Susan could only shake her head.

"Bless my soul," said Berry. "Never mind. Let's drown it in drink. Besides, it's not his fault. Only . . ."

"What?" said Susan.

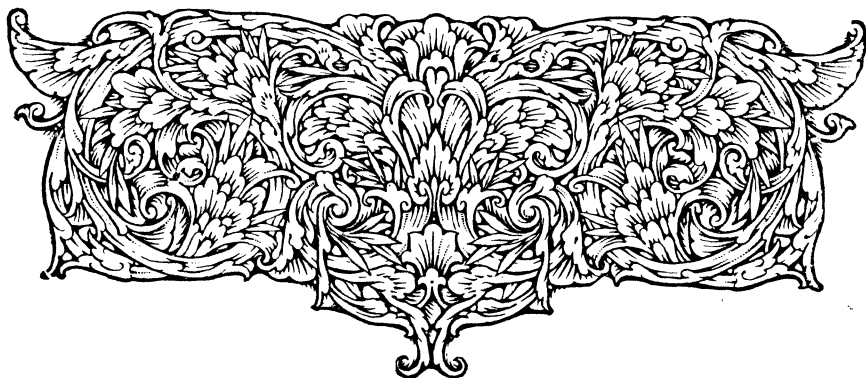
Berry laid a hand on Nicholas' shoulder.

"Well," he said, "if it wasn't because of his title, what did you marry him for?"

Susan and Nicholas laughed.

"*Noblesse oblige*," they said.

*Another complete story by Dornford Yates will appear in the next number.*



## THE CUCKOO.

**B**ETWEEN the sudden gusts of rain,  
When winds sweep fresh before the year,  
When tree and bush and hill stand clear,  
When wondrous gleams of living blue  
Peer through the rent clouds' wintry hue,  
The cuckoo shouts again.

Quick gleaming after April rain,  
Again the golden fire runs through  
The stoutheart gorse, and spreads anew  
The buttercups' glad galaxy,  
And kindles golden hope in me,  
When cuckoos shout again.

DONALD SMITH.

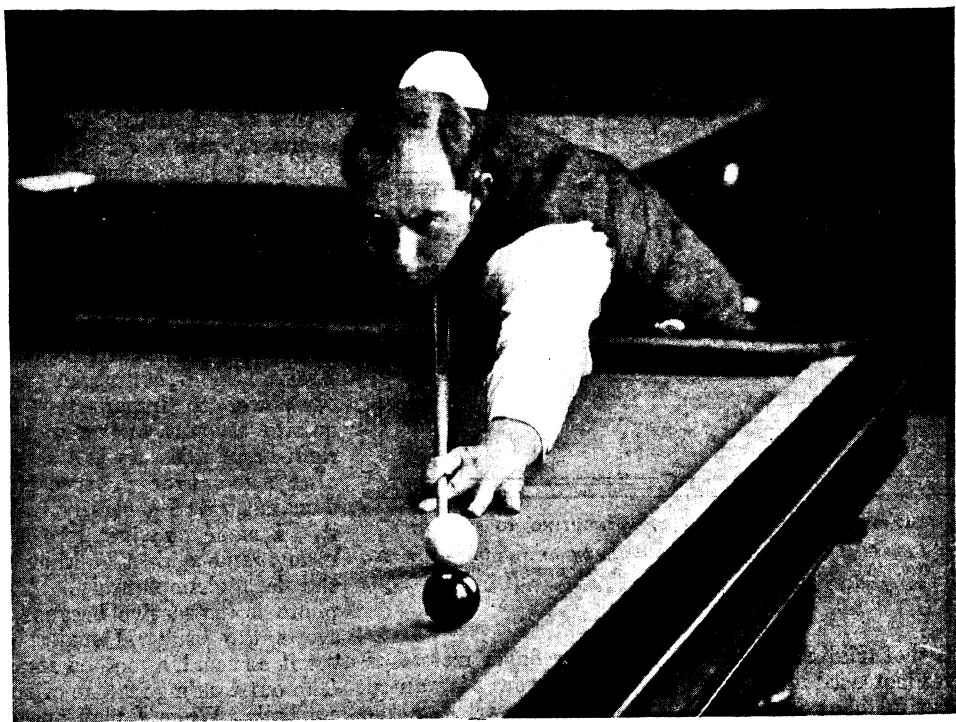


Photo by]

[Victor Hey.

A SCREW-BACK LOSING HAZARD (SEE DIAGRAM 2).

*Note the bridge used for this shot. The cue slides under the forefinger instead of over it—a method which gives increased firmness when great cue-power is wanted. In this photograph I am shown playing the stroke illustrated in Diagram 2.*

# BATTLING BILLIARDS

By WILLIE SMITH

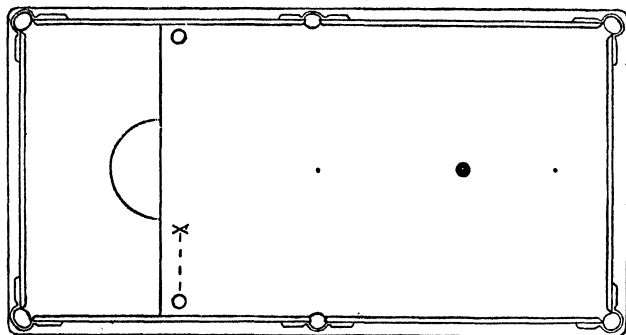
FROM the title of my article I do not wish my readers to suppose that my game of billiards is just one hard stroke after another, and that the battle for points is so severe that I am frequently called upon to play the shots I am about to describe. This is not true. The strokes I am about to deal with are those which occur when the balls get out of hand. The bulk of my points are scored by keeping the balls well *in* hand, for it must never be forgotten that positional play is the soul of billiards.

But when you have to battle for points, it is often difficult to decide whether it is best to play for safety or attempt to score. My first diagram indicates a case in point. The

red is on the pyramid spot, the position of the other two balls is seen at a glance in the diagram. My ball is to the right of the table. There is a chance of pocketing the red in the left top pocket, but it is a winning hazard anybody is more likely to miss than to make. A cannon played with strong side off the top and right-hand side cushions is also possible, but most uncertain, and of no positional value. Therefore I should give a miss to the point shown by the cross in my diagram, thus compelling my opponent to attempt a risky shot if he tries to score, and leaving me in greatly improved position on the red should he give a safety miss.

The real secret of battling billiards, however, is not safety play—it is big breaks and

plenty of them, which means that you must always be prepared to face a difficult shot with the determination to do what you can to keep your break going. My second diagram with its accompanying photo shows what I mean. As the balls lie, a most



1.—PLAYING FOR SAFETY & ATTEMPTING TO SCORE.

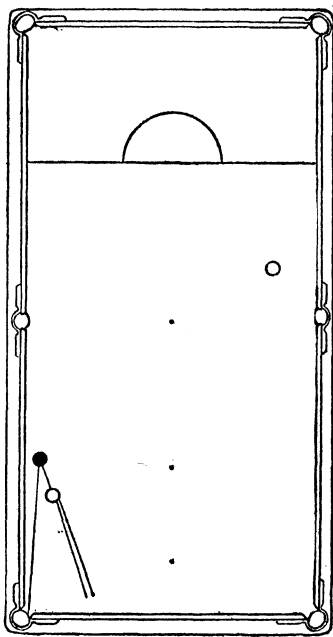
*Here I should give a miss to the point shown by the cross in my diagram, thus compelling my opponent to attempt a risky shot if he tries to score, and leaving me in greatly improved position on the red should he give a safety miss.*

this shot, sliding my cue under my forefinger instead of over it as usual, a method which gives increased firmness when great cue-power is wanted. The outstanding feature of this beautiful shot is the amount of side imparted to the cue ball. When I play one of these shots to my complete satisfaction, you can almost hear the cue ball humming with side as it spins into the pocket.

Although, as I have said, I am no believer in "safety first" as a good motto for battling billiards, yet there are times when it pays. Diagram 3 illustrates one of these instances. The red is practically tight against the baulk cushion, the cue ball is in the centre of the table, and the object white is close to the facing side cushion at the angle shown in the diagram. Of course there is a cannon of sorts playable here—there always is all the while there are three balls on the table, no matter where you put them—but this is a case where I consider discretion to be the better part of valour. Consequently, I do not try to score, but play a safety shot fine on the right of the white, using a little right-hand side on the cue ball and bringing it back across the table to the point marked with a cross in the diagram. This cuts my opponent's ball into a wretched position near the top pocket, and gives me a chance to do something with the red at my next stroke if he gives a miss. Of course, if his ball *does* happen to trickle into the top pocket, I am excessively sorry, and at once proceed to set up the best double baulk I know anything about.

While I am about it, I may as well finish my illustrations of safety shots in this article, and I will do so by presenting, in Diagram 4, a stroke which has a strong family resemblance to the one shown in Diagram 3, but there is this very important difference. When I play to cut my opponent's ball towards the baulk pocket, I put a trifle of right-hand side on the cue ball, and play to leave that ball on the spot marked by a cross on the diagram. This gives me command of the familiar and lucrative cross-loser off the spotted red, and whenever I go out for safety

awkward screw cannon from red to white is offered, but is not good enough; there is no telling where the balls will be left even if you are fortunate enough to make it. That is why I prefer the screw-back losing hazard into the right-hand top pocket, a tremendous stroke, I admit, calling for great cue-power to impart the requisite amount of screw and right-hand side. It is a shot I always go out for when occasion demands, and I generally make it. I made one just like this in my game against Falkiner in the last championship. The photo is instructive because it shows the bridge I make for



2.—THE AWKWARD SCREW CANNON FROM RED TO WHITE HERE OFFERED IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

*I prefer the screw-back losing hazard into the right-hand top pocket, a stroke calling for great cue-power to impart the requisite amount of screw and right-hand side.*

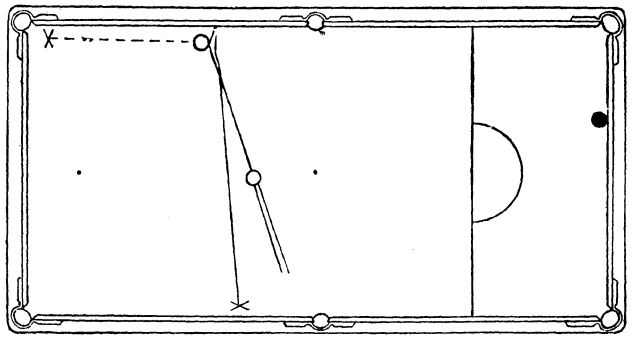
I always like to leave this opening for myself. What I may leave for my opponent is another matter; in this connection I always hope for the worst—for him.

Against Inman I have quite a pet manoeuvre of this kind which I exploit when having a bout of safety play with this redoubtable exponent of the fine art of closing up the game. This position occurs when the red is on the spot, and Inman seeks safety by giving a miss in baulk, but not before he is positive that he cannot leave a double baulk—trust him for *that*. Suppose he gives a miss, leaving his ball in baulk as shown in Diagram 5, then I always give a miss to the point marked by a cross in the diagram. Alternatively I may give a miss to the same point on either side of the table, if I do not consider there is anything worth going at, thus ending my break. Then Inman must disturb the balls or leave me with a fine chance at the red if he decides to indulge in the luxury of an answering miss. At one time and another I have set Inman some teasing problems by giving a miss to the position shown by a cross in Diagram 5, and I can honestly advise any reader who may be in doubt about the best location for a miss always to follow my example when the red is on the spot, and the opponent's ball is where a cannon is more or less difficult, rather *more* than *less*, if it can be so arranged.

Diagram 6 shows a shot I made at Thurston's when playing Tom Newman in one of our series of seven matches. It is a very aggressive stroke, but what was I to do? I could have potted the white and engineered a double baulk; but big breaks are not built in that way, and you need as many big breaks as you can make when crossing cues with Tom Newman. So I made a battling endeavour to keep the break going by playing for the ambitious "double event" shown in my diagram. It came off very nicely, and the house rose at me as the red doubled across the table into the middle pocket, while the cue ball came round for the cannon. The shot was decidedly a good one, calling for much screw and left-hand side on the cue ball, and very nice judgment in striking the red. I know there is an element of chance in it, but what sort of billiards can any man play if he is not prepared to take a sporting chance every now and then? What is the

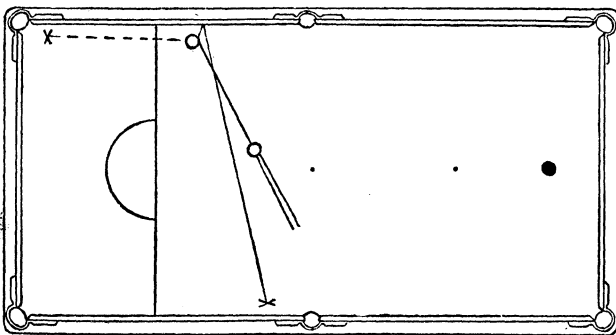
use of losing heart and starting cushion crawling the moment the balls run difficult? That is not battling billiards or anything like it.

I also loosed against Newman the tough old warrior shown in my photo and Diagram 7. Played with the rest, as depicted in the photograph, it was rather a performance to pot the red on the baulk line, and screw back to the vicinity of the spot, thus attaining excellent top-of-the-table position by one bold shot. This is one of the few instances in which a really big screw-back is equally spectacular and profitable, and the effect is



3.—A CASE FOR DISCRETION.

*There is a cannon of sorts p'ayable here, but I prefer to play a safety shot fine on the right of the white, using a little right-hand side on the cue ball and bringing it back across the table to the point marked with a cross in the diagram. This gives me a chance to do something with the red at my next stroke if he gives a miss.*

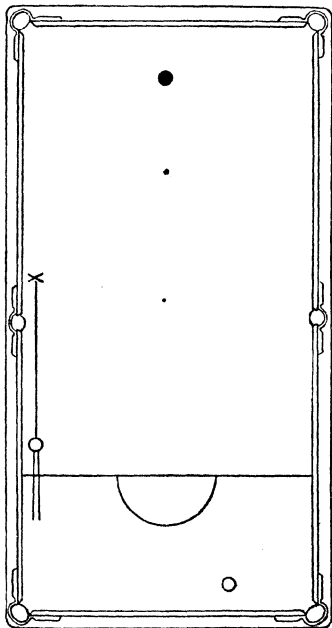


4.—ANOTHER SAFETY SHOT.

*Here I play to cut my opponent's ball towards the baulk pocket, and with a trifle of right-hand side on the cue ball play to leave that ball on the spot marked by a cross on the diagram. This gives me command of the familiar and lucrative cross-loser off the spotted red.*

heightened by using the rest—I may explain that I did not use it from choice. When I have to screw a ball back like this, I much prefer to dispense with the rest. In fact, battling billiards or no battling billiards, I would much rather not play the shot at all. It would suit me a great deal better to have the red hanging on the brink of the middle pocket, so that I could just tap it down and roll my ball up towards the spot without any trouble. I wish it to be clearly understood that I play a screw-back of this fighting calibre only under very great provocation.

Diagram 8 is nothing much to look at, but it is one of the hardest shots I know anything about, so very difficult



5.—WHEN MY OPPONENT GIVES A MISS, LEAVING HIS BALL IN BAULK.

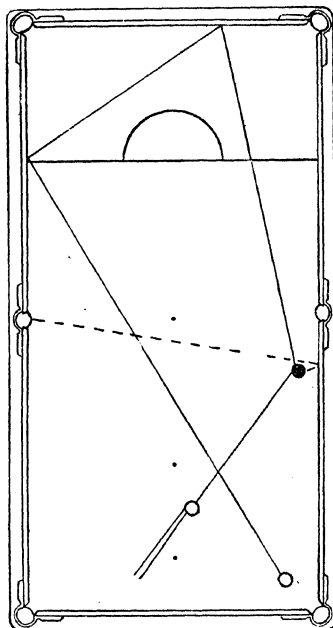
*I nearly always give a miss to the point marked by a cross in the diagram. Alternately I may give a miss to the same point on the other side of the table. Then my opponent must disturb the balls or leave me with a fine chance at the red if he decides to give an answering miss.*

of trouble. But I do not care for the shot if I can avoid it; my view is that masse effects are more in keeping with the cannon game on a pocketless table. In English billiards I like to make full use of the pockets; there are six of them, and they are not there for ornament. This preference for the pocket accounts for the one-cushion loser shown in Diagram 9.

So far as I know, I am the only player who exploits this shot as part of serious battling billiards. I do so because it takes the cue ball back to the baulk half-circle in a single stroke, and shows me a clear path to that open game I have found so profitable. When I make it I clear the object-white nicely away from the top cushion, and

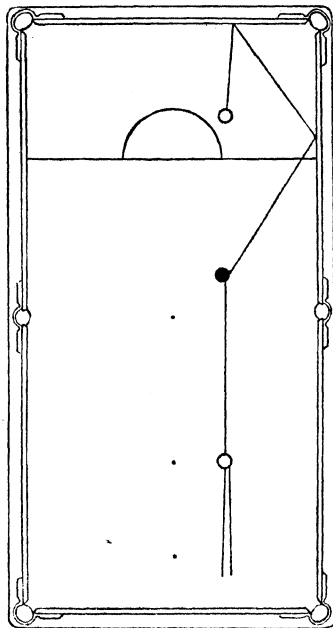
that I would sooner play the terrific screw-back shown in my previous diagram. The peculiar difficulty of this two-cushion cannon is the abnormal angle the cue ball has to make off the baulk cushion. The angle off the side cushion is a simple matter, but it requires a tremendous amount of right-hand side on the cue ball to bring that ball back straight on the white—the normal course of the cue ball would take it best part of a foot to the left of the white—and to compel it to make the requisite departure from the natural angle is a tough proposition, one I would rather see the other chap compelled to face when battling for points.

The masse cannon is a very pretty shot. I play it at times when the balls are close together, and you have to make a "whirly one" to get out



6.—AN AMBITIOUS "DOUBLE-EVENT."

*This diagram illustrates a shot I made when playing Tom Newman. The red ball is doubled into the middle pocket, the cue ball going round the table for a cannon. This shot calls for much judgment in kissing the red ball.*



8.—ONE OF THE HARDEST SHOTS.

*The peculiar difficulty of this two-cushion cannon is the abnormal angle the cue ball has to make off the baulk cushion. The angle off the side cushion is simple, but it requires a great amount of right-hand side on the cue ball to bring that ball back straight on the white.*

leave an ideal position from which to carry on my break when playing from hand. The main requisite is to gauge the correct spot

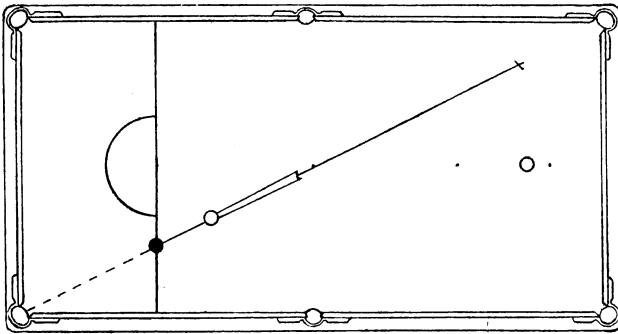
on the side cushion which has to be struck by the cue ball, and while this is far from easy, yet I must say that it is by no means so next to impossible as is often supposed. If a cannon was played for instead of the pocket, the stroke would arouse no comment if made by an amateur of average skill, so I rather fail to see why it should be considered so very daring to play for the pocket in the manner shown.

Of course I know very well that a cannon offers a larger target than the pocket, but the disparity is not great enough to make a

loser off a cushion so very hopeless. After all, we play any number of "doubles," and if it is a good stroke to play to pot a ball *via* a cushion, why should it be considered so extraordinary to go in off a ball by the same method?

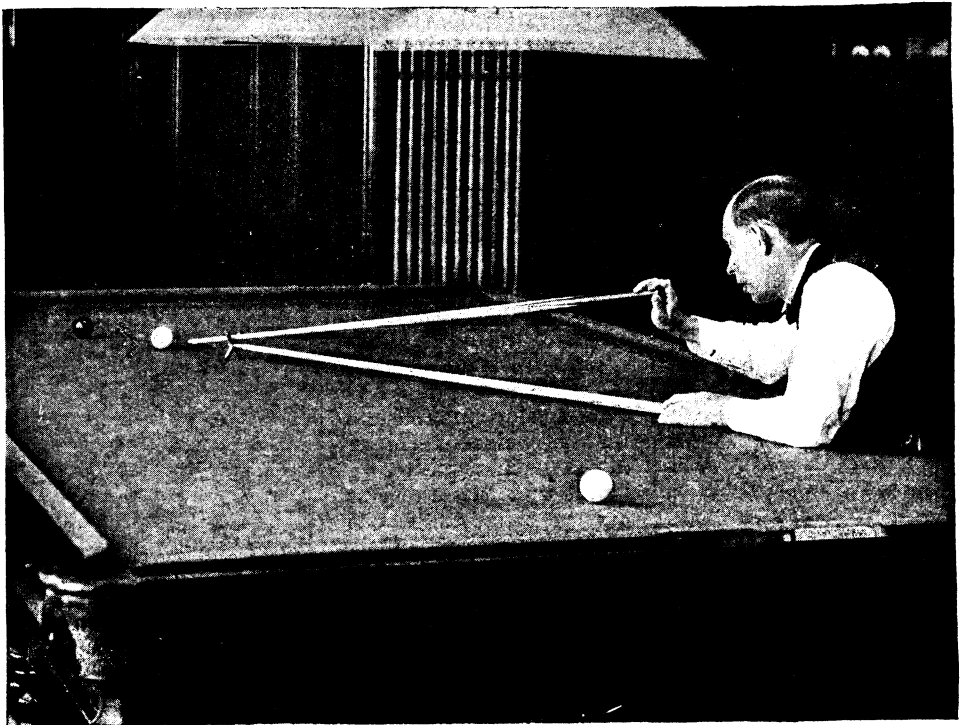
I have an idea that this aspect of English billiards offers

a big scope for many enterprising strokes, and I hope to make many of them when I am in a battling mood.



7.—A SPECTACULAR AND PROFITABLE SCREW-BACK (SEE PHOTOGRAPH BELOW).

*This is one of the few instances in which a really big screw-back is equally spectacular and profitable. Played with the rest, as depicted in the photograph, it was rather a performance to pot the red on the baulk line, and screw back to the vicinity of the spot. Excellent top-of-the-table position is thus attained by one bold shot.*



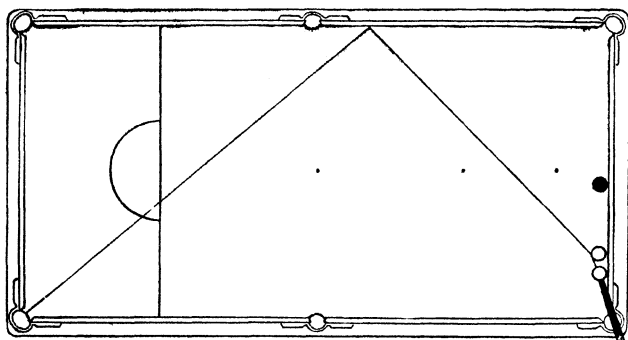
*Photo by]*

*[Victor Hey.*

THE SCREW-BACK WHEN USING REST (SEE DIAGRAM ABOVE).

*In this photograph I am, potting the red and screwing back for top-of-the-table position, as shown in Diagram 7. Note the position of the rest and cue in this very spectacular shot.*





9.—A ONE-CUSHION LOSER.

*The main requisite in playing this one-cushion loser is to gauge the correct spot on the side cushion which has to be struck by the cue ball. When the balls are in the position shown, I prefer the loser to the masse cannon which is also on.*

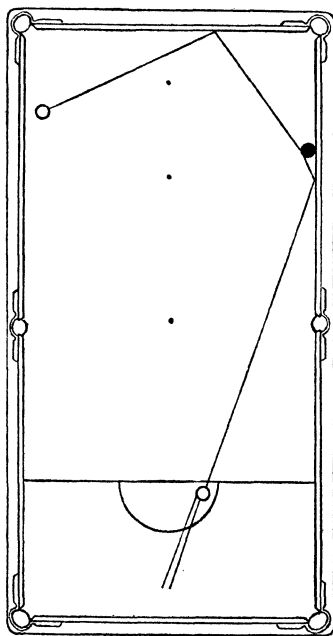
be greatly improved thereby. As a general rule, the main thing to be careful about is to strike the cushion far enough in front of the first object ball to avoid too full a contact, as that will surely spoil the stroke. These strokes should not be played at all hard. I should make the cannon shown in Diagram 10 at the proper strength to leave the red somewhere in the vicinity of the right-hand top pocket.

I cannot say that Diagram 11 is inserted to encourage my readers, for it is rather a tall order to make a cannon off six cushions. In fact, you have to strike a billiard ball very hard to make it hit all six cushions, as you can soon prove for yourself by placing the ball on the left-hand spot of the "D," and playing on the right-side cushion about midway between the middle and top pockets. Then you will find your ball will be very

"tired" by the time it rolls off the baulk cushion towards the sixth and last cushion. The cannon shown in Diagram 11 makes the ball even more "tired," as the impact with the first object ball, although slight, takes a perceptible amount of pace off the cue ball. This cannon is not a fancy shot. I scored it in match billiards against Newman. I made it with strong top and running side, and free and forcible cueing—the latter is the main requisite. I admit that it is a defiant sort of thing to go out for, but the secret of my battling billiards is that I never play for safety if the lie of the balls offers me anything at all worth having a shot at.

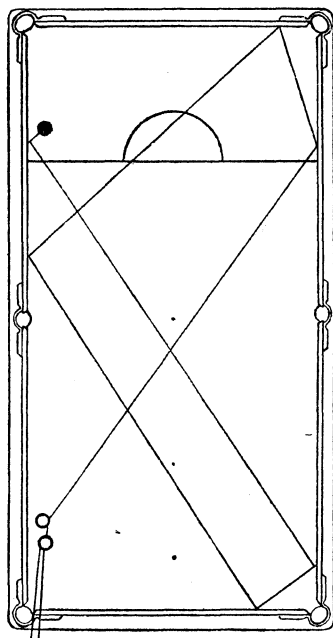
My twelfth and last diagram shows a double-strength three-cushion cannon I made when the

Diagram 10 is put in to encourage my readers. Really the cannon is not very hard if you strike the side cushion before hitting the red, and impart a little left-hand side to the cue ball. Still, it is a battling stroke. It is so easy to play for safety by just tapping your ball against the right-hand side cushion, but the cannon as shown in my diagram is much the better game. After a little practice any cue-man who can make a twenty break will be able to shape confidently at a wide range of these cannons, and his battling billiards will



10.—TO ENCOURAGE MY READERS.

*This cannon is not very hard if you strike the side cushion before hitting the red, and impart a little left-hand side to the cue ball. The main thing is to strike the cushion far enough in front of the first object ball to avoid too full a contact.*

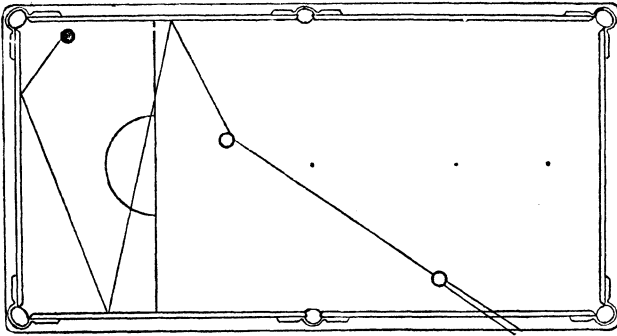


11.—A CANNON OFF SIX CUSHIONS.

*This cannon is not a fancy shot. Play with a strong top and running side, and free and forcible cueing—the latter is the main requisite. The impact on the first object ball must be very slight.*

balls ran the awkward cover depicted by the artist. No drawing, I fear, can convey more than a faint idea of the real terrors of this leave. The three balls are practically straight in line; any attempt at a follow-through is sure to result in a kis. The only feasible shot is the cannon I played for, and this wants a great deal of getting, take my word for it. There is no need for a tremendous amount of side, but you want just enough to help the cue

ball to make the requisite angles as it crosses and recrosses the table. This is not easy to estimate, and the ball-to-ball contact is harder still to judge correctly. It has to be gauged to a fraction of an inch, or the right-hand cushion will be struck wrongly at the first impingement of the cue ball, and the cannon is sure to be missed. Altogether, it is a battling stroke, and by no means unworthy to end my article on this phase of billiards.



12.—A DOUBLE-STRENGTH THREE-CUSHION CANNON.

*The cannon played here wants a great deal of getting. Just enough side is required to help the cue ball to make the requisite angles as it crosses and recrosses the table. The ball-to-ball contact has to be gauged to a fraction of an inch.*

## VAGRANT VOICES.

**A**LWAYS along the cliff,  
On cloudy nights like these,  
There are sounds . . . I wonder if  
They are sounds of winds or seas?  
Voices that seek some clue,  
Vague, half-articulate,  
To force a pathway through  
Impenetrable Fate.

They all but come to speech,  
And then are driven back,  
Defeated, out of reach,  
On a wild and lonely track.  
Ah, how they strive and strain  
To make their meaning clear,  
If yet there may remain  
But one receptive ear!

The brambles and the brakes,  
The grasses whistling low,  
As the vehement sea-wind takes  
And rocks them to and fro,  
To those strange sounds respond  
With notes of little worth—  
Those mysteries far beyond  
All secrets known on earth.

For is it song that stirs,  
Vagrant above the foam?  
Or do drowned mariners  
Implore for news of home?  
You bafled, yearning ghosts,  
O say, some day shall I,  
With your importunate hosts,  
Wander, and drift, and cry?

MAY BYRON.



# THE NIGHTINGALE

By BRIAN HILL.

**E**ACH night, when I am in my bed,  
Across the ceiling overhead  
The lamp outside my window throws  
The shadows of the tall elm tree,  
Which sways its branches sleepily  
All night till morning glows.



I see each shadowed branch that weaves  
Strange patterns for me of its leaves  
Upon the ceiling twist and bend,  
And once when, on a windy day,  
A little branch was torn away,  
I missed it like a friend.



And once—O Sweet!—I seemed to see  
A shadow on the breathless tree—  
A bird, ecstatic in the gloom:  
Was it a dream? I know this well—  
That night a music rose and fell  
Like light within my room.

# THE OTHER THIRTY-NINE

By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

KENTON drifted into the picture gallery as a straw drifts before the wind. The place offered refuge from a downpour of rain. As well kill the next half-hour here as anywhere.

The groups of people did not interest him. Their chatter seemed futile. With a faint flicker of amusement he imaged the masterpieces on the walls contemptuous of incompetent critics. "Pretty decent . . . not half bad. . . ." He listened to phrases with an ironical twist of his lips.

Kenton came to a final pause in the room set apart for modern painters. He dropped into a seat with a yawn of relief. There were few people in the room, and the stillness was soporific. Kenton's head began to nod. He pulled himself together with a start as an elderly man, catalogue in hand, seated himself at the other end of the seat. He was a drab little man, spectacled and bald. Kenton glanced at him without interest. He would have closed his eyes again but for the touch of the other's hand on his arm.

"Excuse me, have you noticed the picture a little to your left?"

"No," Kenton answered. "I'm afraid I came here to get out of the storm, and with little thought for the pictures."

"Well, but it's an extraordinary thing." The little man was staring wide-eyed at Kenton. "Most extraordinary."

Kenton turned his head, following the direction of the other's pointing finger. The babble of the old man's sentences ran on.

"It's one of Lentley's early studies. He's a front-rank man to-day. He takes a face, reads it, and gives its secret to the world. You wouldn't so much say that Lentley painted portraits as that he dived for hidden things."

Kenton slightly twisted his shoulders so that the picture fell more clearly into his

line of vision. The stream of chatter persisted from the other end of the seat.

"In every one of Lentley's pictures he gives the pith of some man or woman's character. There, for instance, is the portrait of a young man who was made to conquer. Look at the tilt of the head, poised for victory."

The chatter ceased momentarily; broke out again in quick sentences of astonishment.

"It's really most extraordinary. . . ."

Kenton met the other's eyes for a moment. "You mean there's a grim kind of resemblance between the face on the canvas and my own?"

The other nodded acquiescence. "A grim kind of resemblance—" The little man broke off, confused. "Excuse me. You gave me the phrase yourself."

"No offence," Kenton smiled.

"It's an extraordinary resemblance," the other babbled. He would have pursued the subject but for the advent of his wife, who expressed her impatience to discover the tea-room.

Kenton left his seat and stood opposite the picture. What an inimitable air of confidence the fellow had! As if he stood dauntless at the gate of manhood! Detail met his eye challengingly, eyes, lips, poise of the head.

One of the custodians came to Kenton's side. "The galleries are about to close."

Kenton came to himself with a start. "Ah, excuse me, I didn't know the time was up."

Out in the street he found the rain over. A high wind chased clouds like vanquished enemies. Here and there stars shone serene above the tumult. Kenton pursued his way, his eyes on the ground. The voice of the little man still seemed to babble in his ears:

"It's really most extraordinary—a grim kind of resemblance."

Chancing to lift his eyes, Kenton saw a man coming towards him. It was a moment before he realised that he was staring at his own figure reflected in the glass door of a tea emporium. How the fellow shuffled, head down and shoulders hunched! His clothes breathed the last word of shabby gentility. Gentility? Kenton could have laughed at the word. There was barely enough of it left to be seen through the lens of a microscope. Again the babble of the old man's voice: "There, for instance, you have the portrait of a young man who was made to conquer. Look at the tilt of the head, poised for victory."

"Stop your chatter!" Kenton fumed inwardly. "It's like the ceaseless trickle of water against stone."

The door of a public house stood invitingly at Kenton's elbow. After a second's pause he opened it and went in. "It's my fortieth birthday," he reminded himself with a shrug. "Here's a toast to Forest Kenton, the ne'er-do-well." ("A young man who was made to conquer. Look at the tilt of the head, poised for victory"—the echo drummed with persistence.) Kenton, in imagery, could have struck those babbling lips to silence. He drank his toast with mental bravado. "Forest Kenton, a man born for failure." When he was out in the street again, there was a hint of swagger in his walk as if he defied life to find a vulnerable spot in his armour.

He lodged in a mean street. His room on an upper floor was drabness in epitome—four walls mounting guard over a few decrepit articles of furniture. For the hundredth time Kenton regarded the place with disfavour as he pushed the door open.

"Scene of my birthday revels," he jested with himself. "Let's hope the curtain will have fallen before the next comes round."

He drew a chair before the flickering remnants of the fire and dropped his head into his hands. Weariness had him by the throat. How many hours to while away before bed? The very seconds were laggards, sneering at him in transit.

Someone was fumbling with the door-handle. Kenton turned his head over his shoulder, amazed. Visitors were as rare as song-birds in December. Importunate, too, this caller. He had pushed the door open with a quick "May I come in?" before Kenton got to his feet.

There were so many shadows in the room

that Kenton could not at first distinguish detail. Tall, broad-shouldered, an assured manner—the candle Kenton lighted added good looks and youth to the inventory.

Kenton pushed his chair forward. "Will you sit down? I'm afraid my establishment doesn't offer the easiest of seats. Such as it is——" His gesture held an awkward suggestion of hospitality, grown stiff from disuse. "That is, if I'm really the man you came to see."

"Forest Kenton?"

"The same," Kenton nodded.

"Then there's no mistake." The other bent suddenly forward, peering at Kenton. "You're the man."

The abrupt exclamation took Kenton's breath for a moment. What on earth——

The other said quickly: "You were in the picture gallery in Galt Square this afternoon?"

"Yes. I dropped in to avoid a storm. As well there as anywhere. The place was well heated." Kenton's voice showed him scornful of anything save warmth and shelter.

The other's gaze had travelled rapidly round the room. Kenton saw recognition of each sordid detail in his eyes. Some quick repulsion was present in his voice when he spoke next.

"In a sense this visit has been thrust on me." His hesitation was like a lighted lamp showing sharp distaste. "One of us had to come."

Kenton had been sitting against the wall, the width of the floor between himself and his visitor. Now he drew his chair forward till he came close to the other.

"Who are you?"

"Don't you know?"

Kenton suddenly put his hand to his eyes, pressing the lids down. In the darkness he pursued memory—frayed edges, strands that snapped as he tried to clutch them. He gave up the attempt with a shrug.

"I've seen you before somewhere. That's as far as I can get. You're familiar and yet an utter stranger. Fickle jade, memory. It's probably a long time since we came across each other?"

"Yes, a good while ago."

Kenton was appraising the other's appearance. Twenty-two or three, probably. Virile, splendid physique. Kenton suddenly hated youth, clear-eyed and vaunting. Apollo come to visit haggard decay! Contempt was eloquent in every turn of the fellow's shoulder.

And hate! As if some screen were raised suddenly, Kenton met a quick rush of it in the other's eyes. He could almost have dodged to one side to escape an imagined blow. The other's voice, when it came, was anger made vocal.

To-day you went into that gallery a down-at-heels derelict, seeking shelter from storm, a sneaking travesty of what you were meant to be!" The other's eyes went rapidly from Kenton's head to his heels and back. Contempt—he voiced it with vehe-



"Excuse me, have you noticed the picture a little to your left?"

"I know things about you—that picture by Lentley, for instance. Listen to its history. You were a young man, clean-lipped, clear-souled. Lentley chose you for his picture of conquering youth. You *were* what Lentley showed you then.

mence. "The very sight of you makes me sick!"

Odd how tongue-tied Kenton felt, and impotent. The rising tide of the other's anger was as irresistible as the rising tide of the sea.

"I didn't want to come to-night. When we drew lots and the choice fell on me, I had to struggle with distaste. The others felt as I did. There wasn't one of us who didn't shrink from the idea."

Kenton forced stiff lips to the task of speech. "The others? What do you mean?"

"The other thirty-nine."

Kenton was bending forward, his hands hanging limp between his knees. His whole body seemed to sag. He made a feeble futile effort to draw himself together.

"You talk in riddles."

"You'll solve them soon. Meantime I told you I knew things about you. There was a girl—Estelle. You loved her. Yes, yes, you were sincere in those days." He seemed to answer a quick gesture of Kenton's. "The tragedy of it is that she has gone on loving you—you as you are now. Think of it! Light loving darkness! You haven't grit enough to pull yourself out of the mud even for her sake. Aren't you deafened sometimes by the clamour of our voices, urging you to climb?"

Kenton interrupted sharply, vehemently: "Who are you? Who are those others?" His hands jerked to his lips as if to still his own vehemence.

"Haven't you guessed? Look at me." He bent forward till his eyes were level with Kenton's.

The cessation of their voices sharply emphasised the stillness. Strange things were born of it; fantastic changes in the visitor's face, for instance. In startling mobility he was at one and the same time child, youth, man. The very soul of the man seemed to change before Kenton's eyes. He saw the other grown sullen, inert, his body sagging forward in his chair. And even as these changes held Kenton's gaze they ceased. The visitor was regarding him, clear-eyed, immovable.

There was something of menace in the stillness, and Kenton broke it.

"Who are those others?"

For answer the visitor pointed to a calendar on the wall. "You see the date?"

"My birthday," Kenton nodded. "The fortieth." He broke off, staring. After a moment he repeated hoarsely: "The fortieth! *Who are the other thirty-nine?*"

Even as the question left his lips he knew. He would have covered his eyes in sheer panic but for the grip of the other's hand on his arm. Again that incredible fantasy of change—child, youth, young man, middle

age, as if Father Time became a lightning artist, producing one charcoal sketch after the other. But the faces seemed ended with life. The sheer menace of hate, for instance, in the eyes. . . .

Kenton would have started to his feet but for that vice-like hold on his arm. The other seemed to have the strength of twenty, of thirty—the past years of his life risen in fury against him.

The visitor raised his hand suddenly and struck Kenton on the cheek. "Curse you for betraying us!"

Kenton shrank before the swift onslaught. Pinioned and girt about by anger! His struggles held the horror of nightmare. Impotent, utterly at their mercy. The sound of his own voice craving release broke the spell. He was awake suddenly and staring about him with amazed eyes. The chair beside his own was empty. His thoughts clearing quickly, he got to his feet with an exclamation.

"Never anything in life more real than that dream seemed!" he told himself. "Accusing eyes! And the voice, 'Curse you for betraying us!'"

He looked at the calendar against his elbow. The date swam before his eyes. The other thirty-nine—quaint fancy of his sleeping brain. Fancy? Truth, rather, and sharp as the thrust of steel against his breast.

There was a half-broken seat against the window. Kenton sat there for a moment, staring at the rain splashing on the panes. Presently he took pen and paper and began to write.

"Estelle, this afternoon I drifted into the Galt Square Picture Gallery. Do you remember that portrait of youth Lentley painted? I saw it again to-day—forty looking back at twenty-three! Amazed—there's no other word. I was once that youth. It's incredible that you should care still. Incredible that this morning I found a letter from you! How like you to remember the date! You even dream that some day I'll be man enough to climb out of this morass. Well, dreams have their uses. I've had one myself to-night."

Kenton sat staring at the paper for a little time. Odd how those other voices seemed still to clamour against his ear. He wrote presently—

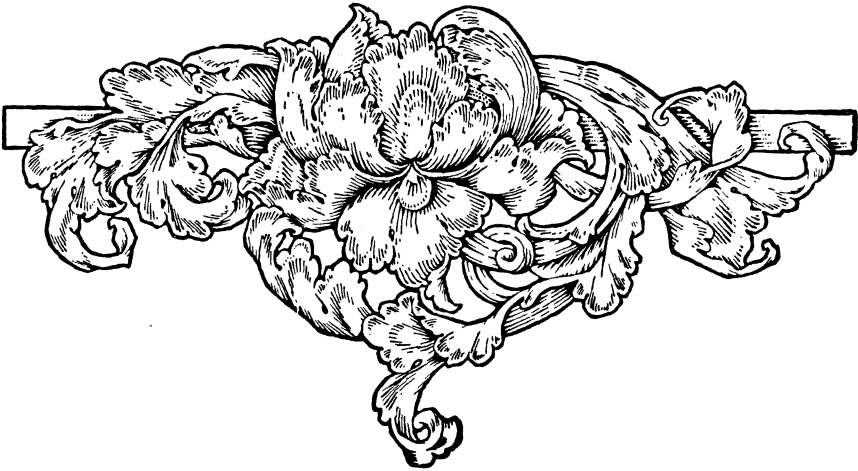
"Don't give up hoping. I'll climb with the last ounce of strength I have. If I get to the top, I'll find you there. Estelle, for God's sake, keep on hoping. Something

to-night shines like a lamp showing the way. In a year's time, on my forty-first birthday, if I've climbed steadily, I'll dare to come and ask forgiveness for the wasted years. I tell you, Estelle, those other years have voices. They're shrill as the call of bugles."

Kenton slipped the written sheet into an envelope, sealed and directed it. He glanced then about the room as if he half expected

to see the face of his late guest staring at him from the shadows, or hear his voice in some sharp exclamation. Oddly, as he thought this, the sound of wind and rain out in the night held momentary resemblance to uplifted voices cheering, applauding.

Even when he would have thrust the fancy aside it persisted. He was encircled by resonant hurrahs and acclamations from the other thirty-nine.



## GILLYFLOWERS.

WHEN I am coming to my own home,  
 After the toil of day is done,  
 Shadows will deepen down the roadway,  
 Dim in the setting of the sun.  
 Yet though the dusk should hide my own home,  
 Calm in the twilight it will wait—  
 Though I were blind, my heart would know it—  
 Know by the gillies at the gate.

So, when I'm coming to my long home,  
 After the burden of the day,  
 Father of all, my heart would pray Thee,  
 Ere I pass down the Shadowed Way,  
 Oh, where Thine asphodels are blowing,  
 Keep Thou some homely blooms of ours!  
 And, at the Gate, among the lilies,  
 Let there be waiting gillyflowers!

ANNE PAGE.





"The brute leapt forward with a scream."

# THE UNREASONING BOND

By ROBERTSON CARFRAE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

**W**HY Leon Stromberg should have entrusted him with the killing of the rhinoceros, Walter Rivette did not know. In reality, it was but a pretext for that inexcusable thing—the humiliation of one white man by another in the presence of African natives.

Rivette was painfully aware of his inefficiency, yet he did not refuse, partly because he did not perceive the drift of Stromberg's intentions, partly because, during the three months they had been isolated together on the plantation, he had fallen completely under the domination of

his employer. They had been killing meat for the boys all the afternoon. As the sun began to drop, they came on the beast feeding, squat and grey as a granite boulder against the scorched yellow of the slope. Thanks to the skilful, upward stalking of Mindози, the gun-bearer, they reached a clump of undergrowth within three hundred yards of him without disturbing even the pair of guardian birds who perched on his shoulders.

Leon Stromberg smiled sourly. "You've never shot a rhino? Then you'd better take this fellow. Make a clean job of it—they're inhuman brutes when they're wounded."

"I've had no experience, you know," muttered Rivette, stung into resentment by the malicious grin.

But obediently, for it was his nature to be obedient to a stronger will, he settled himself for a shot. Peering over the sights, he saw the big bull turning slowly as he tore at the shoots; presently he was broadside on.

"Now!" whispered Stromberg. Rivette tried to control the wavering of the barrel, held his breath, and pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot sang in his ears and the kick of the rifle jarred him for a second. As the wisp of smoke drifted across his eyes, he blinked nervously. So far as he could see, the beast had not moved.

"Hit, Mindози?" The voice of Stromberg sounded very loud in the stillness.

"Not badly, *bwana*. Another shot—quickly! Come back!" The Somali boy spoke in sudden alarm, but his warning went unheeded.

Whether by accident or design, Rivette could not tell, but Stromberg had stepped from cover and now stood gazing unconcernedly at the wounded bull. The beast's head was swinging from side to side very close to the ground.

"If he sees us, or smells us, he'll charge, Rivette. Keep your head and shoot straight, or he'll have you!" Stromberg laughed shortly.

Realising with an amazed suddenness that he need expect no help from his employer, Rivette aimed again with fluttering nerves and indrawn breath. The rhino had lumbered round uncertainly until he faced them; from the bush came the startled clamour of the birds.

"Wait until he comes close, *bwana*," advised Mindози, who had remained by Rivette's side, serene in his confidence in

the white man's marvellous weapons. "He comes now!"

The big bull began to move forward; his head was thrown up and then the nose dropped until his horns were almost parallel with the ground. He had got their scent or heard them; at a lumbering trot he began to move down the slope.

"Ready, *bwana*!" warned Mindози coolly. Rivette's nerves were on edge, and for the life of him he could not keep his rifle from swaying off the mark; by no effort of will could he control the pounding of his heart.

The trot became more rapid, broke into a gallop. He could hear the thud of the huge hoofs as the bull came on dead straight, aflame with his primitive instinct to kill. He was now two hundred yards away, running blindly as a railway engine.

Rivette aimed. The distance lessened to one hundred, yet his finger was rigid on the trigger, then eighty, sixty, fifty. Holding his breath, he pulled. The crash almost deafened him; by a stupendous effort he hurled himself aside as the great bulk thundered past.

When he regained his feet, he looked round dazedly. Twenty yards away, at the foot of a tree, stood Leon Stromberg, bending over something. He scowled as Rivette approached.

"He stood too long!" he muttered curtly. "Dead as a doornail—pitched clean into this tree—his neck's broken. Pity, for he was a good boy. You're a rotten shot!" He stared at Rivette under drawn brows.

"Oh!" Rivette's face was white; he felt sick. Mindози had been caught and hurled aside by the shoulder of the charging brute; was now motionless in a grotesquely twisted attitude. Swift anger flamed in Rivette at the sight.

"Why didn't you shoot the brute? You stood by deliberately, without raising a finger. Why? Did you hope it would be my death instead of his?"

"Cut that out!" growled Stromberg heavily. "Fetch up the boys and we'll get him home. Quick!"

Rivette did not speak. He straightened his back, automatically picked up his rifle, and walked down the slope to the dried-up gully where their porters had been told to wait. They were enthusiastic when he found them, gloating over the rhino, which had only gone another three hundred yards before heeling over in a clump of bush. He lay there now with one stiff leg thrust into

the air, a caricature which made Rivette shudder.

He led the boys back ; in a sudden hush they looked on the body of the boy who had paid so high a price for his faith in the skill of the European. Eventually they began their trek back to Stromberg's plantation, the two men walking in silence, divided by a wall of hatred.

They reached the *shamba* as darkness fell, passing through the native village to reach the bungalow which crowned the hillside. The news had travelled before them, and the people were silent. Rivette was conscious of sullen looks and averted eyes. Here and there a woman squatted, rocking herself to and fro, and an occasional wail of mourning from the huts pierced the murmurous stillness of the night. There was foreboding in the air ; an invisible menace seemed to hang over the place.

What Stromberg thought of it, Rivette could not tell ; it was impossible to read anything in the man's tight lips and hard eyes.

Had he but known, the mind of Leon Stromberg was filled with apprehension of trouble ; in his dim brain strength and the weight of his square red fist were the only resources, and he felt that they might be inadequate. But his hard eyes mirrored nothing of this. He had hewn his plantation from the primitive bush by the sheer force of his physical strength ; by sheer strength he would hold it, his beautiful *shamba*.

They sat on the verandah together, saying nothing ; each was absorbed, almost fascinated, by the monotonous drumming which came from the village. Red lights flickered here and there like glow-worms, acrid wood-smoke from the fires drifted across the belt of rubber trees and stung their nostrils.

" Boom ! " came the thumping roll of a drum, and again " Boom ! "

Stromberg hitched round in his canvas chair. " An inferno ! " he muttered. " Look here, Rivette, you understand these brutes. That means trouble, doesn't it ? "

Rivette shrugged his thin shoulders. " I don't know. War-drums, aren't they ? "

" You understand them, I say. Tell me, do you think they mean to turn on me ? " The question seemed to be forced from his unwilling lips.

" I can't tell you that. How am I to know ? " Rivette tapped on the table with an impatient finger ; he could not endure the fellow,

" You ought to tell me—to help me ! Didn't I bring you here from Mombasa when you were destitute ? Haven't I given you work—you, a destitute tramp skipper ? You might have starved but for me. And now you won't help me. But I tell you, Rivette, this place is mine, and I'll keep it against all the natives in Africa ! "

The veins in his neck stood out like cords, his eyes were red in the lamplight. Rivette did not answer ; he could see nothing threatening in the commotion in the village. Besides, his mind was running on other matters—the insults he had endured, the way in which Stromberg had almost compelled him to come to this accursed plantation. And above it all he thought of the iron discipline under which Stromberg's boys had suffered. If the fellow reaped trouble, what had he sown ?

Stromberg walked up and down the narrow verandah, talking in low tones—talking as though he were unconscious of a listener. Rivette was amazed. The man was torn by fear. When he looked at the expressionless eyes and scarcely-moving lips, he saw no sign of the inward ferment.

" They made you a blood-brother of their village, didn't they ? " demanded Stromberg suddenly. " Foolery ! But it gives you a hold on them. You must help me—you must ! "

Then, as quickly as it had come, his fear left him. He swung round and his powerful fist crashed on the table. " But I'll beat them yet ! " he snapped savagely. " Yes, and you as well ! "

He dropped into his chair and watched the light of a torch which had burst into flame in the village. It stood still, then moved steadily towards them. Rivette, looking at Stromberg, saw no sign of emotion on the stolid face ; now that the thing was coming to a head the man had regained his iron self-control.

The light came closer, winding through the trees of the *shamba*, now hidden from view for a moment, now suddenly reappearing.

The man who carried it appeared, followed by a group of the villagers. They were led by an old man, whose face had the lined, carved appearance of a mask. His thin beard moved as he recited a mumbling rehearsal of his speech.

Standing by the steps, he began : " A goat has been eaten, *bwana*, by a leopard, and there is grief in the village. We come to tell ! "

"What's that?" demanded Stromberg. "Send boys to watch for him. To-morrow I will shoot that leopard."

The old man paid no heed, but hurried on with his appointed speech: "Abdullah, the father of Mindozi who was killed, says that this beast bears the soul of his son. Therefore it would be evil to kill it. This am I told to say."

The veins on Stromberg's neck swelled. "Get out of this before I do you harm, old one. Tell Abdullah that medicine-work is forbidden; he and I will have a reckoning to-morrow. I will kill the beast!"

The native turned to his fellows. Stromberg, standing by the table, turned on Rivette. "This is your doing! I knew that accident would lead to trouble—the leopard is only an excuse!"

"Tell them to shut all the animals up at night. The leopard will go somewhere else when he finds nothing here. Hunger will make him trek. Let the whole thing lie until he does," advised Rivette.

"Superstition!" muttered Stromberg. "I won't give way to it! I must be master here!" His voice dropped to a whisper. "I must!" he whispered, as if to himself.

The natives turned away, muttering amongst themselves, and the light of their torch faded to a speck in the distance. Stromberg mopped his face shakily; in spite of himself he could not banish the picture of those sullen black devils with their yellowy eyes and sleekly rippling muscles.

"I'm not going to allow any fakir in Africa to beat me," he said sulkily. "Weakness is the worst thing possible in dealing with natives; only fear can hold them."

"If I try to quiet them for a time, will you let the whole affair drop?" asked Rivette. In some unaccountable way he was touched by the man's dogged courage. "Possibly I can pacify them."

Stromberg looked at him contemptuously. "You're too late. The thing must be fought out now. I'm going to bed."

Rivette sat on in his chair. In the village the drumming had begun again, so persistent that it seemed to beat on his very brain, dulling his power of thought. A chant began, rising and falling like the growl of a caged beast.

"I wish I could make the fellow see what an obstinate fool he is," thought Rivette. "There will be the devil to pay soon."

He wriggled in his chair, angry and strangely humiliated by Stromberg's obvious

scorn of his suggestions; he felt that he could do nothing to bridge the gulf which lay between them.

## II.

WALTER RIVETTE lay on his creaking camp-bed under the white oppressiveness of his mosquito net. The noise in the native village had died away, but the faint light of fires, that he could see through the open door, showed that the people were still awake. Stromberg knew it; a few minutes ago he had shuffled in and dropped a revolver on the little table.

"These brutes are going to fight. Take this; you'll need it," he muttered. Then, grunting, he had gone back to his own room.

Rivette was disturbed, not by the prospect of rebellion, for he had seen his share of that during his sea-going days, but by the doubtfulness of his own position. It was a beastly prospect. All his sympathies were with the natives, a decent enough lot except that they were between the devil of their master's ways and the deep sea of their superstition. On the other hand, the thought of abandoning one of his own kind made him flush in the hot darkness.

He was saved the necessity for making a decision in advance. From the verandah came a scuffle of many feet and a low call of "*Hodi!*" He slipped from under the net and crept towards the door.

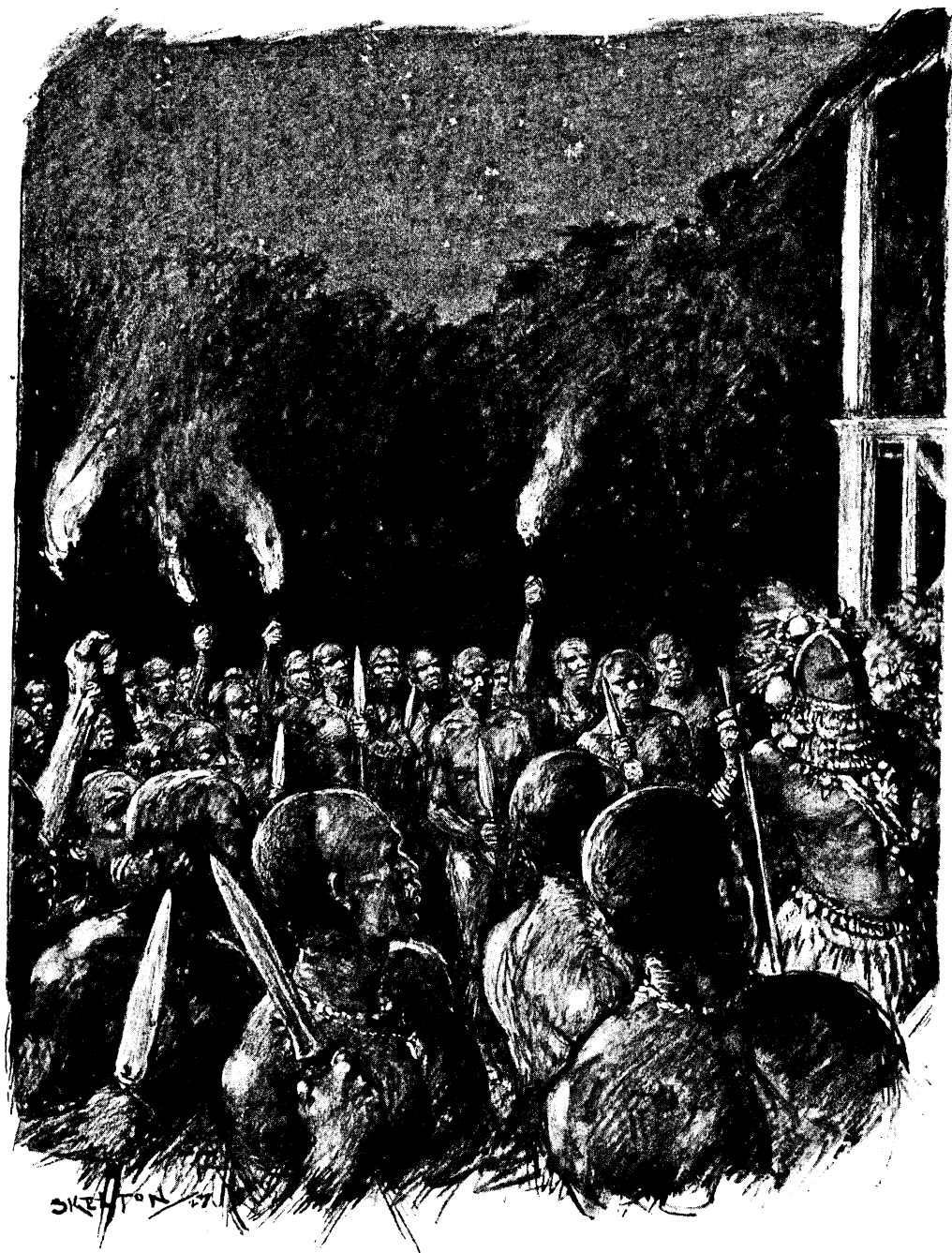
Outside, in the smoky glare of ringed torches, stood a crowd of natives, their faces and bodies bedaubed with earth. They were preceded by a witch-doctor in a grotesque mask that reached his shoulders, a crouching creature hung about with ornaments of brass. Rivette recognised with a shock that they were the same men who laboured day by day in the plantation, gone back without warning to their original savagery.

Leon Stromberg confronted them, his jaw set. Rivette thought that he made a fitting part of the picture.

The witch-doctor stepped forward and held up his hand for silence. "There has been a *ngoma* in the village, *bwana*. Visions have come to me, and the spirits order that the killing of the leopard be stopped. Is it agreed?"

Stromberg scowled. "I am master. You will obey me or take the consequences."

"Each is bound to his fate, *bwana*. The white rules the black, but he himself is ruled also. You are not higher than the spirits. They command that this beast be spared and allowed to feed. In him is the soul of



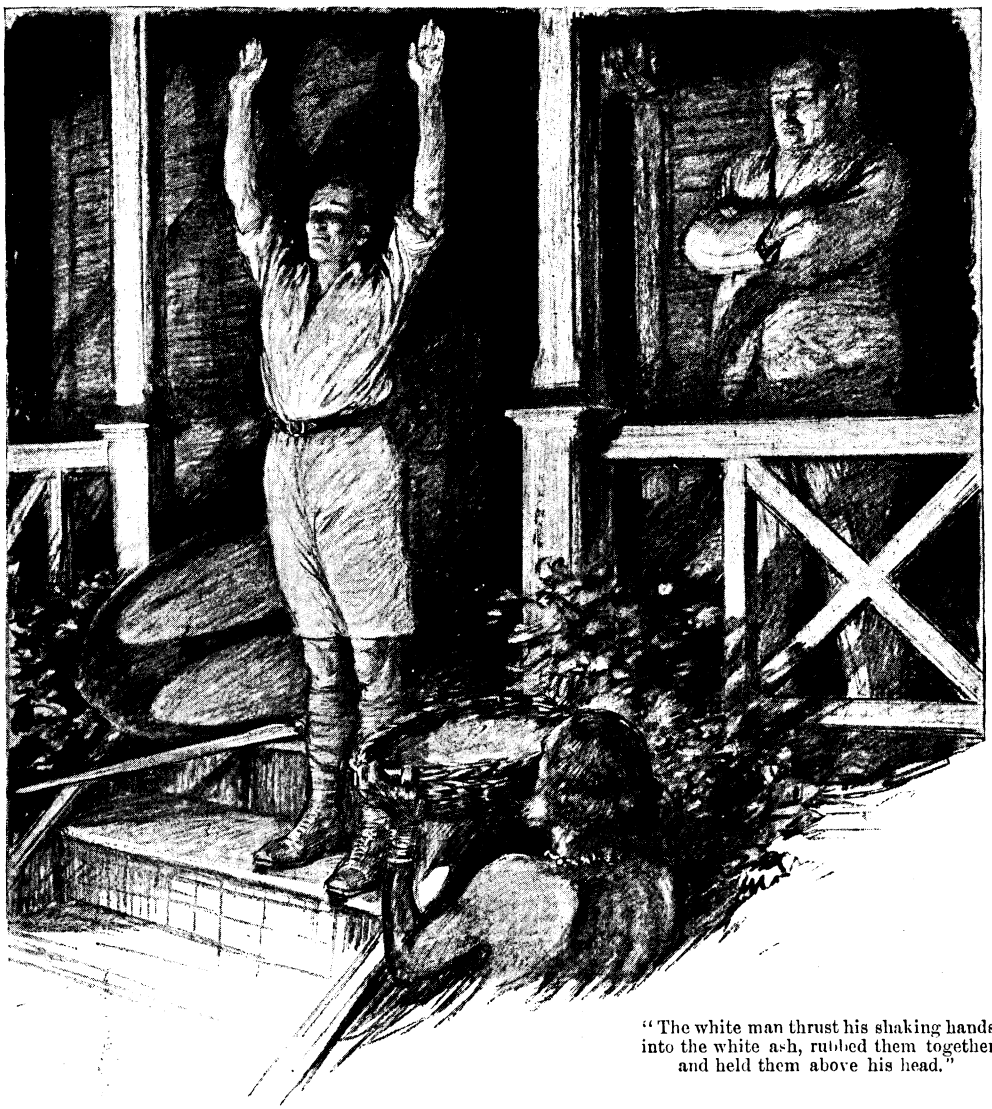
"A mutter like the rustling of leaves passed through the throng."

Mindozi, who was a hunter and has gone to his own kind for shelter. To kill him is against *dasturi*, and will bring on us vengeance. Heed the warning, *bwana*!"

"That I call foolishness!" muttered Stromberg angrily. "The only law here is my order!"

He swung round and began to pace

heavily up and down the verandah. The witch-doctor shook his head and returned for further talk with his fellows. Rivette saw the short spears raised, heard the quick ripple of anger which passed through the crowd. He stepped from the sheltering darkness of his room and confronted Stromberg.



"The white man thrust his shaking hands into the white ash, rubbed them together and held them above his head."

"Get out of this!" growled the planter. "This is my own affair."

Rivette paid no attention. "Come over here and talk to me, Abdullah!" he called.

The witch-doctor stared, then obeyed unwillingly. In the deep shadows by the corner of the house Rivette spoke with a cheerfulness which he did not feel.

"Now, what is all this? Is it but an excuse to let your discontented young men kill him? Tell me the truth, Abdullah."

"*Bwana*, it is no work of mine," said the old witch-doctor eagerly. "I speak truly, for we have always been friends, you and I. My blood runs cold in my veins; I am too old for fighting. But the younger men say truly that the *bwana* will bring evil on us,

and blood will flow. If the seed is sown, the crop grows, despite all talk. But you need not fear; my people are honourable, and their vengeance is not against their blood-brother."

"That I believe. But is there not a custom which allows a scapegoat in such matters as this?"

The witch-doctor shook his head. "It stands thus, that custom. A scapegoat may be appointed by the rubbing of ashes on his palms. Then that man must kill the beast, and if there is a punishment, it falls on him alone. But it is only permitted when the presence of the beast means danger to the village. If there is no danger, a scapegoat is forbidden."

"Can the offer be refused if it is made?" asked Rivette.

"No," answered Abdullah decidedly. "It is a matter between the man and the spirits. But it is impossible, *bwana*; not a man in the village would take so great a risk."

"But I am your blood-brother, Abdullah," reminded Rivette softly. "Suppose I offered myself, rubbing ashes on my palms?"

The witch-doctor stared about him doubtfully and turned away. Over his shoulder he whispered: "You would be accepted. But consider, *bwana*, that the beast must be killed with a spear and shield as your only weapons. That is a matter for years of practice. Consider also his strength and cunning."

Rivette, leaning against one of the posts of the verandah, felt an involuntary shiver run through him as though a cold breeze had suddenly blown through the hot, steamy night. He looked at Stromberg, now standing motionless, glaring stolidly at the group of natives. There was no trace of emotion on the man's face, though his hands were clenched till the knuckles gleamed like ivory in the lamplight.

He himself was terrified at the prospect of fighting a leopard in the dark with no weapon but a spear; the temptation to refuse was strong. Glancing at Stromberg, he was conscious of an unwilling admiration for the man's tremendous pluck; his mind must be a whirlpool of fears and apprehension, yet not a ripple showed on the surface. Rivette began to be ashamed of himself.

Turning, he found Stromberg glaring at him from beneath drawn brows. "Have you finished your talk?" he asked coldly. "I bring you here to control these natives. When a crisis comes, you spend your time arguing with their leader. I suppose you have arranged that your own skin will be safe?"

The insult bit home. Rivette decided that he would do nothing to help such a brute. Why was it that he could never find himself in sympathy with the fellow?

He noticed Stromberg's hand run caressingly along the rail of the verandah, and his anger died. The simple action showed the immense affection that was inspired by the place; to Stromberg it was the visible record of a life of toil. Doubtless in the eye of his mind he saw the red flames licking about its walls. Rivette's doubts vanished,

and he stepped to the edge of the verandah, holding up his hand for silence.

"Pay heed!" he called in Swahili. "I am blood-brother to you men of Mronda Chini village. Bring me ashes, that I rub them on my palms. By that I claim the right, laid down by *dasturi*, to kill the leopard which prowls near us, taking the punishment on my own head, if punishment there be. Is that agreed?"

"It is between you and the spirit people," said Abdullah.

Rivette felt Stromberg's hand grip his shoulder, spin him round with an effortless pull. "What foolishness is this? You'll be killed! Infernal superstition! I won't have it."

"You brought me here to control the natives!" snapped Rivette obstinately. "Well, I'm doing it. Leave me alone."

A tottering old man forced his way through the crowd of blacks, carrying ashes. Stromberg grunted and fell back a step.

"The ashes," mumbled the elder. "There is not long to wait for an answer in the case. Long ago a wise man gave talk thus: If the beast has a spirit, the *bwana* will be slain. If not, the spear goes home. I remember. . . ."

"Peace!" grunted Abdullah. "This is no time for old men's tales. Whatever happens, it makes an end of this *shawri*. Give the *bwana* ashes and look out a fitting spear, long and sharp, with a shield."

He laid the things at Rivette's feet. The white man thrust his shaking hands into the white ash, rubbed them together and held them above his head. A mutter like the rustling of leaves passed through the throng.

"The leopard has been tracked to a thicket beside the waterhole," volunteered a voice.

"The *bwana* knows the place," said Abdullah. "Go now. To catch him full-fed and asleep is more than half the task. Haste, *bwana*! Aim for his heart or the throat and strike deep!"

Rivette picked up the weapons. Without a glance at Stromberg he walked down the verandah steps to the path; it would not do to show the panic of terror which had seized him. His legs were quivering beneath him, but his mind was calm as he plodded steadily through the plantation, past the long rows of native huts, into the solid blackness of the bush-path that led to the thicket.

Thin tendrils of thorn bushes tore his skin, he struck his ankle against a sharp rock; he was curiously indifferent to physical pain.



The bush became thicker as he went on ; single trees became groups, enlaced by creepers until the thicket rose before him in sheer blackness. Here and there he could see a star-studded patch of violet sky gleaming between the branches. He bore to the left, treading cautiously amongst the tangle of thorns, his body tense, his ears tuned to catch the slightest rustle from the beast.

He came on a path, no wider than his foot, leading straight into the thicket. He paused and shifted the spear until it balanced in his hand ; thus it felt less clumsy. A bull-frog croaked in the swamp by the water-hole. Rivette started and his nerves began to twitter ; sweat ran down his face in the closeness. But there was no other noise—nothing save the hum of a cloud of hovering mosquitoes and the sound of his own breathing.

His instinct was to flee—to turn and bolt from the oppressive nearness of the trees that seemed to engulf him. He suppressed the temptation with an effort, moved one foot past the other with sliding caution, and began to edge forward slowly.

His resolution, now that he was denied the relief of quick physical action, lessened with each endless minute. When the path twisted abruptly and drew him into the well of darkness completely, his heart began to beat in throbs that were almost audible.

Then Rivette's body stiffened into immobility and his slow progress was arrested. The reek of dead flesh reached him ; the breath of a sleeping animal came faintly. He tried to establish the position of the beast from where he stood ; it was impossible.

"I can't go back now, even if I would," he thought almost with satisfaction. He raised the spear and moved it with a swinging motion ; the feel of it gave him confidence.

A twig broke and an animal grunted ; there was the swish of a tail against the grass. Rivette's body shrank together behind the shield and he crouched ; inch by inch he went forward in the direction of the sound.

Somewhere, far away, a branch broke and something forced its way through the bush ; a startled animal—monkey, perhaps, he thought incuriously. The place appeared to be less dark now ; perhaps dawn was near. He didn't know ; he had lost count of the hours.

Rivette moved again. Suddenly through the gloom shone the greenish opalescent glare of eyes. As he looked they dropped downwards ; the leopard had seen him and

was crouching for a spring. A terrifying, choking snarl broke the stillness. Rivette's spear went up and he sank behind the shield.

Again that snarl and the slash of an angry tail. A second's pause and the brute leapt forward with a scream. As the heavy body crashed against the shield, Rivette struck. His arm jerked out with a snap ; he was flung sideways and the beast was behind him.

Blindly, thinking of nothing but the fight, he twisted himself round to meet the second attack. This time he was determined that the spear should go home.

Again came that coughing roar and again the leopard sprang. Rivette stepped backwards, his foot lost grip, and the heavy body crashed down on him. He felt the claws sink into the muscles of his left arm with a sickening scrunch of flesh ; the pain made him scream aloud. But his mind was clear, and he schooled his quivering body into immobility, forced himself to breathe softly. His only hope was to delude the brute into leaving him for a moment.

Pinned to the ground, he felt the hot breath of the leopard on his face as it sniffed suspiciously over him ; felt the pressure of one pad on his chest.

The place was deadly still. Above him he could see a greying patch of sky through the trees ; vaguely wondered if he would survive to see the setting of that sun.

The spear still lay in his grasp, and his right arm was free, but there was no room to strike. If only the beast would move ! The inspection went on ; the brute's nose travelled over his body curiously, while its tail threshed from side to side. Rivette's eyes were closed.

Without warning came a noise of movement in the undergrowth. He looked up to see that the beast had raised his head and was standing with pricked ears and quivering nostrils, apprehensive of danger. Rivette saw the pale fawn-coloured throat above him ; now was his time to act.

He closed his fingers on the spear, grasping it just below the blade ; with a jerk flung himself clear and struck with an overarm circling of his arm. The broad blade went home just below the jaw, and the leopard leapt upwards, crashed down on him in a plunging ball of fury. By some instinct he had covered his eyes with clasped arms, and could see nothing. The great cat rolled and twisted beside him, and he felt a stab of pain as one of the slashing claws cut through the soft leather of his boot and tore the flesh from his ankle. It sent a thrill of terror



through him, and he crawled away, sick and ill.

Blindly he tore at the thorn bushes that restrained him; blindly he stumbled on, half crawling, half walking, through the undergrowth to safety. Behind him the threshing went on. Suddenly he realised that it had stopped. Rivette did not turn his head, did not even pause. Somehow, anyhow, he must leave that reeking, tearing horror behind him.

He emerged at last into comparatively open ground, and the first red rays of the sun poured into his eyes. Behind him there was no sound. For a moment he stood uncertainly, staring at the blood which bespattered him. Then, with a quivering sigh, he sank to the ground.

### III.

WHEN his eyes opened, Rivette found himself in the bungalow at Mronda Chini. Outside, the usual rows of natives worked amongst the rubber trees, whose leaves were speckled with the white sunshine of afternoon.

He blinked and turned his head. Stromberg stood looking down on him, his brows furrowed with anxiety.

"D'you feel all right?" he asked. "I tied you up as well as I could—I'm not good at bandaging."

"What happened exactly?" asked Rivette. He wished dizzily that he could stop the irritating throb in his leg. "Did that brute die?"

Stromberg smiled. "It did. The boys are in high feather over it, planning some kind of feast. I'm afraid I misjudged them—and you." He looked at Rivette almost humbly. "What made you do it? I don't understand."

"It was a chance, you know. And in this country one can't afford to risk trouble. Besides, we're white and we are alone."

"Oh!" Stromberg looked out over his beloved plantation for a long minute. "I can't think of any way of thanking you. . . ."

"I suppose the skin's ruined?" interrupted Rivette, flushing.

"It is. The beast's carcase is outside." He walked to the doorway and looked out.

When he came back, Walter Rivette appeared to be asleep.

## BLUE AND GOLD.

**T**HE sun is banished from our wedding  
By winter mists that droop and fold  
Grey houses and dim streets in shadow,  
And hang o'er copse and heath and meadow,  
And cling about the barren wold.

He'll shine again when Spring comes knocking  
With hands that will not be denied,  
And cries on that long melancholy  
With songs of joy, and strews the folly  
Of Maytime on the countryside.

Yet all the time our sun was shining,  
Our hearts were warm and light and free,  
So close to one another beating,  
So sweet a secret song repeating:  
"I love you, dear, and you love me."

And Spring, who lifts the veil that covers  
The gay world's hidden gold and blue—  
We shall forestall him in the heaven  
Of azure peace your love has given  
And girt with golden thoughts of you.

LEOPOLD SPERO.



"My aunt!" he said aloud. "My *sacred* aunt! She must be pulling my leg."

# "... AND WILL SHORTLY TAKE PLACE"

By PHILIP BURTON

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

PETER RUSCOTE passed across his youthful and usually untroubled brow a hand that perceptibly trembled. He was sitting in the living-room of his little Baker Street flat, a room that was untidy, shabby even, but essentially comfortable—sitting, to be more particular, in a generously-proportioned leather-covered armchair that was unmistakably a relic of Oxford. He was clad, for the most part, in a mustard-coloured woollen dressing-gown, and there reposed precariously on his knees a silver chafing-dish that held two appetising but as yet untasted kidneys. One gathers, rightly enough, that he was a bachelor.

He had descended to the hall some five minutes earlier, in answer to the postman's knock, and had returned with a letter, settled himself and the chafing-dish comfortably in the chair, and broken open the

envelope with a smile of anticipation. It had taken the letter perhaps three seconds to wipe that smile off his pleasant, rather ugly face.

Now he held the letter at arm's length in his right hand, while he ran the fingers of his left through his close-cut hair. His expression, as he stared bleakly at the sprawling characters that ran obliquely across the paper, was one of mingled bewilderment and dismay. "My aunt!" he said aloud. "My *sacred* aunt! She must be pulling my leg."

He studied the letter again, seeking for some evidence that would justify the hope. "... and so you see, Peter," ran the hurried, unpunctuated writing, with its familiar loops and swirls, "when Bunty suddenly let fly in front of the whole family, I lost my head and before I knew what I was saying I said—well, what about it?"

I suppose you know we're engaged! Peter old thing I'm most frightfully sorry—I can't think *what* made me say it, I feel an absolute rotter! Of course, all the others started pulling my leg, and when I went out of the room—just to get courage to come back and say it was all rot—Dad came out and talked to me. I shan't tell you what he said, Peter, but he is a dear, and he was awfully decent—and I simply *couldn't* do it after that. Peter, you must be a pal and back me up just for a *very* little while till we can find a way. . . .”

No, it wasn't a leg-pull—no use pretending it might be. Pam's style might not be lucid, exactly—it might, in the eyes of a purist, be regarded as incoherent—but it was convincing, deucedly convincing.

He put the chafing-dish on the floor at his side, levered himself out of the chair, and, fetching a pipe from the mantelpiece, filled it with the tobacco he carried loose in his dressing-gown pocket. He sat on the edge of the paper-littered table and, sucking furiously at his pipe, composed himself to think the matter out. Presently his frown grew deeper. He removed the pipe and stared at it resentfully, then crossed again to the mantelpiece and found matches. The taste of the smoke in his mouth set his thoughts in better order.

He had known Pamela Westbourne—how long? Twenty years, anyhow. He could recall quite distinctly a picture of Pam, then a plump, almost spherical person of some two summers, tripping over a croquet hoop on the lawn and howling dismally. That had been on his sixth birthday, when Dick and Miles had brought her over to tea. Dick Westbourne was out in India now, a sapper major, and Miles—Miles had “gone west” at Loos.

Hardly a memory, when he came to think of it, that was not connected in some way with the Westbournes. Their land marched with his father's, and their house had been open to him ever since he had been old enough to escape from his nurse and wriggle through the gap in the hedge that separated the paddock from their orchard. They were that sort of people; even at a later age one did not call upon them—merely strolled in through the inevitably open front door and shouted for whoever might be about.

It would have been a lonely life, he realised, had it not been for them—a lonely life for a little chap alone in that big house with a father who cared so much more for

his dead wife than his living child. Peter had made himself, as it were, an honorary member of the Westbourne family, had enlisted under the banner of the autocratic Dick, and accepted without question the orders of that born general who so ably controlled his little army in its many campaigns of mischief and depredation. Fishing in forbidden waters, hunting old Farmer Peabody's mustangs with improvised lassoes, thrilling reunions, with evil-smelling bull's-eye lanterns beneath their coats, after they had been sundered and sent to bed—all the fun of his childhood he owed to the Westbournes, Dick and Miles, and presently Pam, and, after an interval, Bunty and Hugh—twins, the last two, and possessed of more natural devilry than the other three boasted between them.

Peter sighed as he thought of those days. A lot of water had flowed under the bridges since then. Mrs. Westbourne's death, the War, the news of his father's fatal fall from a horse, that reached him on an aerodrome in France, and at long last peace, that found him, one of the lucky few, sound alike in nerve and limb.

It had been a rotten business, he reflected, selling the house, but it had to be done. Useless to face civilian life with a couple of hundred a year and a fifty-acre estate that swallowed more than that in upkeep. He had got a good price, though—good enough to give him a chance to start a motor business in the Marylebone Road with one Reggie Sanders, a friend of his flying days, whose knowledge of cars was only equalled, as it proved, by his own flair for selling them. It had prospered, that business, astonishingly. Two men at least had contrived not to lose their heads during the boom, or their profits during the ensuing slump.

And through all the busy time that followed the War his friendship with the Westbournes had remained unimpaired. He was still one of the family. He ran down to Bidminster for week-ends, stayed at the Park as a matter of course. There was a bedroom that had been known for years as “Peter's room.”

Of course he had seen a lot of Pam—a young woman, these days, pretty as a picture, but no less a sportsman than of old. They drove together, danced together more than a little, played tennis together all the summer. People were talking down in the town, he heard. “Let 'em,” said Pam characteristically, and he had been content to leave it at that. They were too good

friends, anyway, to let that sort of thing worry them.

And then, last week-end, had come the dance over at the Chesneys' place, the other side of Bidminster. Why *had* he kissed Pam? It was such a rotten thing to do. It was after the sixteenth dance, he remembered, when they were sitting out together on the verandah. Of course he had wanted to kiss her—had wanted to, if it came to that, for years—but he had always realised that she looked on him as a friend and nothing more, had told himself he would be a fool to risk losing that friendship. This time something had seemed to snap. He had quite suddenly caught her to him in the dark and kissed her, and there had been nothing platonic about the kiss at all. What a beast he was! What was it Pam had said—dear old Pam, putting things gently, as she always did—after she had slipped her hands up to his shoulders and pushed him away? “You mustn't do that, Peter, old son. You've always said we were simply pals, and—and it would be pretty tragic if one of us made the mistake of thinking we were something else, wouldn't it?” Yes, she had let him down lightly. It was more than he deserved.

He might have guessed, he told himself, that Bunty would have spotted them. She was the sort of infernal flapper who spotted everything. And naturally, when Pam, in the capacity of elder sister, had started preaching propriety to her one morning at breakfast, Bunty had loosed off the shot she'd been keeping in her locker. And Pam had lost her head. Unlike her, that; still, it must have been a pretty trying situation. . .

The telephone bell interrupted his thoughts. He picked up the instrument from the table at his side and unhooked the receiver. “Hullo!” he said. “What? Oh, it's *you*, Pam? Yes, just read it. No, of course I don't mind, except that I'm tremendously sorry to have landed you in such a mess. . . . Eh? Yes, of course I will, as long as you like. I'll come down the day after to-morrow, Friday, in the morning. Yes, rather! And, Pam, I say, old thing, how long will it be after you've ‘jilted’ me before we can decently meet again? . . . What! . . . Here, Pam, hold on. . .”

He stood there, a ridiculous figure in his mustard-coloured dressing-gown, with the receiver still pressed to his ear, while an expression of bewildered joy gradually spread over his features. He was engaged in deciphering the meaning of the last words

that had come over the wires from Bidminster. A pause had followed his question, and then Pam's voice, very low, infinitely distressed, “Oh, Peter, I never *thought* of that!” and the click of a suddenly replaced receiver.

He arrived at the showrooms barely in time to meet Reggie coming out to lunch.

\* \* \* \* \*

Peter stopped the new two-seater at the top of the drive, and walked slowly round the circular rose-bed that separated him from the house. Before the open doorway he paused a moment, dallying with the inevitable. He wished, for the first time in his life, that he had to ring a bell, to ask formally for Miss Westbourne: he would have welcomed any expedient for gaining a little time. Then he shrugged his shoulders and stepped out of the sunlight into the cool shade of the hall. Inside he stopped again; his mouth opened and closed several times before he achieved what was expected of him. “What ho, within!” The house echoed to his time-honoured shout of introduction. With a nervousness that was strange to him he listened, holding his breath, for a reply. From above, somewhere came a cry, muffled and remote. “Bath!” it said. That was Bunty. From the passage on the left came the familiar, sonorous bellow of Colonel Westbourne, “Gunroom!” Peter waited a moment longer. There was no sign from Pam. He walked down the passage to the gunroom with feet that had grown heavy.

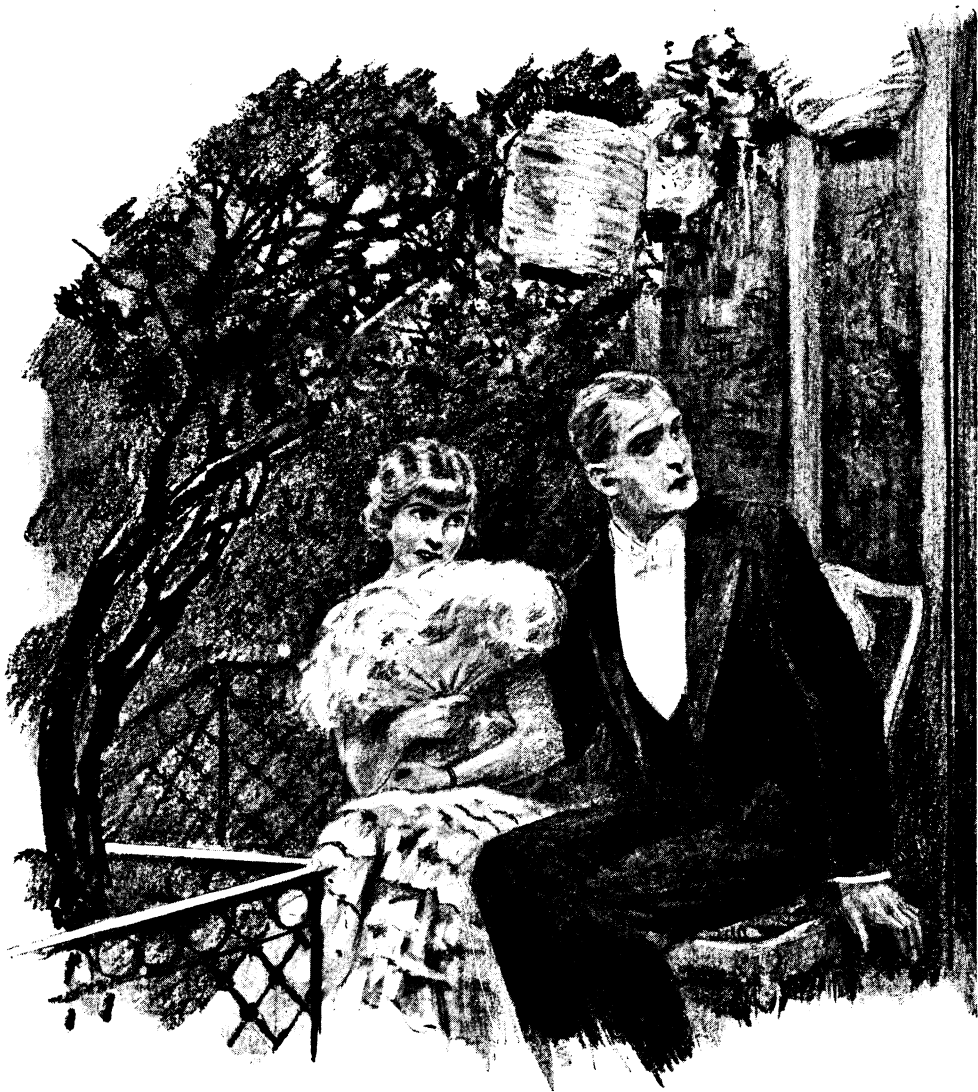
The Colonel put down the gun he had been examining and advanced towards him with outstretched hand. His eyes twinkled in his weather-tanned face, and his moustache bristled with a deceptive appearance of ferocity. “You young blackguard!” he cried, gripping Peter's hand and shaking it up and down. “Eh, what? Get engaged to my daughter and never trouble to tell me about it? Think I wouldn't be interested, or was it just contempt for the old bogey of parental authority? Answer me that, sir!” Peter opened his mouth to reply. “Don't you dare to answer me back, sir!” cried the other, wagging a finger in front of the unhappy Peter's nose. “Don't you dare! I insist, as a father, on giving my consent. You may not want it, but, by Jove, my boy”—he became suddenly serious, and laid a kindly hand on his victim's shoulder—“you shall have it! I'm very glad, Peter—very glad. I wish you all the happiness in the world, you and my little Pam.”

Peter followed his eyes as he looked over his shoulder, and for the first time he saw that Pam stood by the window at the far end of the room. She was bending over some flowers that lay on the window-seat, and her face was in profile.

"Hullo, Pam," he said rather unsteadily,

ears there was a hint of viciousness in the last words. He reddened uncomfortably.

Colonel Westbourne looked from one to the other and grinned beneath his moustache. "Lunch is at one," he said abruptly, and walked towards the door. They heard it shut behind him.



"Reggie, red of face and breathing heavily through his nose, disengaged his right arm from Pamela's waist."

and then stopped—ought one to add "darling" or something? How *did* people speak to each other in public when they were engaged?—"old egg," he added feebly.

"Hullo, Peter," she replied, without raising her head, "old ass." To Peter's

Peter crossed to the window and sat down at the far end of the bay from Pam. He thrust his hands into his pockets and stared at the door. "Decent weather, lately?" he said at last.

Pam broke the head off a daffodil deliberately. "Beautiful, thank you," she

answered coldly. “And the vicar’s youngest daughter has mumps, and Bunty’s cat has got kittens, and they are all doing *quite* as well as could be expected, considering the gardener drowned three, and aren’t the days drawing out? Peter!”

delightedly. “Same old Peter!” she said. “Come along, then.” He held up the window while she scrambled through, and jumped down to join her on the lawn. It was against Westbourne etiquette to use a door when there was a window handier. They made for the drive together, talking



“Peter was the first to speak. ‘Pam!’ he cried, in a terrible choking voice. ‘Reggie!’”

“Yes?” He looked up and caught her eye for the first time.

“Don’t talk tripe.” He grinned at that, and found comfort in her answering smile.

“Sorry, old thing. I’ve felt a bit rattled, as it were. Come out and have a look at the lady I really *am* in love with—my new sports Negretti.”

She threw back her head and laughed

and laughing with the unrestrained enjoyment of a pair of children, chaffing each other about their latest predicament.

Evening was falling when the car came up the drive again, back from the trip that had started after tea. Pam was at the wheel, her face flushed with the kiss of the wind, her hair floating in delightful disorder where it had escaped from beneath her hat. She

smiled radiantly into Peter's face as she pulled up outside the house. "Oh, Peter, she's a lamb of a car! An absolute rip-snorter! Did you see the speedometer when I let her out down the Causeway? Seventy-two. You are a lucky dog, you know. I'd give anything to have a car like this."

Peter frowned reflectively. "Well, you are sort of engaged to-it," he suggested.

She coloured and turned her head. "Can't let a bloke be happy for five minutes, can you? Come on inside."

They passed into the house in silence, but in the hall she turned suddenly and caught his arm with a little cry of dismay. "Peter, don't say I forgot to tell you about the dance to-night?"

"Not you," he assured her, smiling down at her serious face. "You told me over the 'phone. And, anyway, Mrs. Chesney wrote that they were having another this week, and asked Reggie and me to come along. Reggie's turning up there on the Crossley, I expect—coming down from Town."

Pam clasped her hands together. "How ripping! I love Reggie. He's the most awful flirt I ever met."

Peter affected a brotherly sternness. "Look here, Pam," he said, "you just behave yourself to-night. I don't want any broken hearts at our place—we're too busy selling cars. Besides—what I mean to say, as your betrothed, I won't have it."

"You won't have it?" she echoed.

He grasped her arms above the elbows and held them gently while he looked into her eyes. "No, I—won't—have it."

Her eyelids drooped demurely. There was a pause. "And that's that," she said softly, and, turning, ran up the stairs towards her room.

Peter watched her go, and his smile became a broad and confident grin. He went out to fetch his suit-case from the car.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a few minutes after one o'clock the next morning that Peter heaved a gentle sigh of relief as the band performed the final flourish that brought the eighteenth dance to an end. He had been fox-trotting with Miss Minting, and as an instance of the way in which the obvious conclusion can prove to be totally incorrect, it may be remarked that she had not been fox-trotting with him. She was a tall, rather angular woman of twenty-eight or so, with a will—and a way—of her own. It was her habit, whether walking or dancing, to move at a brisk pace, and if the band and her partner elected to

choose a pace that was slower—well, that was their look-out. "Dancing is such a valuable exercise," was her way of putting it.

If you asked Bidminster people about Julia Minting, they said, a trifle uncomfortably, "Oh, she's awfully *kind*, really!" and it must be admitted that she was much taken up with charitable works. It is unfortunately a fact that her interest in other people's affairs was not invariably actuated by motives exclusively charitable. Her tongue had often caused more trouble in one evening than her guilds and societies and private benevolences had smoothed out in ten years.

Peter gave her his arm and led her to a chair at the side of the room. "How wonderfully you dance, Miss Minting!" he said, seating himself rather stiffly beside her. "You put such go into it, as it were. Really, I wonder you have the energy, after being so busy all the time. How is the—Sunday-school?"

She returned his amiable gaze a little sternly. "Really, Mr. Ruscote, I wasn't aware you were interested in it?"

He avoided her eye. "Well, not actively, as you might say. Still——"

Miss Minting nodded her head at him with heavy playfulness. "I expect you're much more interested in something else just now," she said with meaning. "Is it still a secret, or may I congratulate you? Dear little Pam! And at one time I *quite* thought—but, there, I dare say there was nothing in it. Nothing *much*, that is. How happy you must be, Mr. Ruscote! Won't you tell me *all* about it?"

Peter leaned forward confidentially. "Do you know, Miss Minting," he replied, "I should *like* to tell you about it. Somehow I feel that you would understand. Couldn't we sit out the next dance somewhere where we can talk?"

She made a great business of studying her card. She wondered audibly whether her conscience would allow her to cut her next partner—decided at last that it would. His obvious relief was gratifying.

In silence Peter led her out on to the verandah and shepherded her down the strip of carpet towards the screen that shut off the far corner. He knew that screen and the two chairs that it concealed. He stepped abreast of her, and they rounded the corner of the screen together.

Peter was the first to speak. "Pam!" he cried, in a terrible, choking voice. "Reggie!" His face was working strangely.

Reggie, red of face and breathing heavily through his nose, disengaged his right arm from Pamela's waist and stood up. "Hullo!" he said in a faint, sepulchral tone. He could think of nothing else to say.

Peter turned again to face him, and only the slightest twitching of his mouth betrayed his emotion. "This," he said brokenly, "is the most terrible moment of my life. I blame myself entirely. Everything I am suffering I have deserved. Miss Minting"—he turned to her with a despairing gesture—"it were best that you should hear all. Years ago, when Pam was no more than a child, she promised to marry me. A few days ago I reminded her of that promise—held her to it, mistook, in my blindness, the misery that her quixotic devotion to honour caused her for the sweet shyness of a young girl's love. Had I known of her love for Reggie—No, no, not a word, either of you. You have suffered enough. Reggie, my friend whom I nearly so terribly wronged, take her. May you both be happy. Pam, my dear, good-bye."

He slipped Miss Minting's arm through his and dragged, rather than led, her up the verandah towards the ballroom. "I'm so glad," he said before he left her, "that it should have been *you*. I know that you will be able to *explain* to people."

\* \* \* \* \*

Muffled in heavy coat and great fur gloves, Peter waited patiently outside the Chesneys' house in the Negretti. It was to be expected that Pam would take a little time.

She came at last, flushed and very bright of eye, with a flimsy blue scarf tied gipsy fashion over her fair hair; ran down the steps and jumped in beside him without a word. They had left the drive behind before either spoke.

"Well, Pam," said Peter cheerfully, "took your time saying good night to Reggie, I suppose?"

She stamped her foot. "Oh, you—you *dirty* dog!" she cried. "I simply hate you! I—" She collapsed into helpless laughter and involuntarily gripped his arm with her hand. "Oh, Peter, how could you? If you could have *seen* Reggie's face when you'd gone! He'll murder you—if he doesn't commit suicide first." She paused, but it was not in her nature to be less than candid. "You know," she went on hurriedly, "it wasn't quite his fault—altogether. You see, you practically *forced* me to flirt with

him, after what you said, and I *did* make the running a bit. . . ."

Peter squeezed her hand against his side and grinned contentedly. "Poor old Reggie!" he said. "He's getting over it all right. Saw him in the cloak-room while you were dressing. We forgave each other. In fact, he's promised to be rather helpful. It's the thought of Julia Minting that worries me."

Pam looked bleakly in front of her. "She'll have a bit to say, won't she?" she suggested.

Peter brought the car to a standstill and, turning, took Pam's hands in his. "Look here," he said softly, "are you game to play the best joke on the Minting woman you've ever played on anyone in your life? Honestly? Well, come up to Town and marry me this morning. What? Of course we can. Special license. Reggie's coming along behind for best man, or witness, or whatever it is—breakfast in my flat—buy you a hat—business in registrar's office—back here for lunch and explanations"—he paused momentarily for breath—"and all the time—just think of it!—the best scandal in living memory shooting round Bidminster. . . . Isn't it indicated?"

Pam gripped his hands a little more tightly and, leaning against him, looked up into his face. "Peter," she said gently, "is it *entirely* the idea of pulling Julia's leg that accounts for the—the matrimonial spasm? Is there nothing—nothing else at all?"

He took a deep breath. Twice he opened his mouth to speak, and twice shut it in silence. Then his arms went round her, and for a long space there was no need of words, and no great opportunity. "Pam," he whispered at last, his lips against her hot cheek, "I'm a hopeless ass at saying things, but I love you so much, my dear, so much, and I always thought it wasn't any good. . . ."

For a long time they had been dimly conscious of a light at their backs, gradually increasing in brilliance, but it was only when a Klaxon cleared its throat with tactful vehemence that they sprang apart. A voice, a loud, cheerful voice, came to them from behind the headlights that shone into their eyes. "Pam!" it said. "*Peter!* Well, well, the young people—the old, old story! *En avant, mes enfants!*"

Always at a tactful distance, Reggie followed the ruby tail light of the Negretti towards Town.



# LONDON'S NEW AQUARIUM

By L. R. BRIGHTWELL, F.Z.S.

*Illustrated by the Author*

FOR the second time in its history London has a big aquarium. Some of us can recall the old Aquarium that once stood where now stands the Westminster Central Hall, and perhaps some, in reminiscent mood, may tenderly deplore the loss of that once famous institution. It was the finest exhibition of its kind at the time. Commencing as an interesting zoological collection, however, it fast degenerated into a medley of side-shows and thrilling spectacles, some of these excellent, others—well, *not*. Of course the love of natural history in those days was nothing like so universal as it is now, so that we may excuse the shows and side-shows on the ground that the proprietors of the Aquarium had to live. But the public taste is continually changing, and the Westminster Aquarium failed to change with it. From a collection of fish and human oddities it presently became that other zoological phenomenon—a white elephant. But we may save our tears for its demise and take them where they will perhaps be appreciated, in the unlikely event of a salt water shortage—to Regent's Park.

Our London Zoological Society has shown itself worthy of its high traditions and of the learned and, above all, imaginative men upon its staff. Now, with the advent of spring, Londoners, and all who visit London, have access to the finest aquarium in the world. No need to point out its significance to any Briton. There is not one native-born but loves the sea, the sea to which these tiny yet fateful isles of ours owe their very being, their heroic past, progressive present, and most hopeful future. Many of the greatest names upon the nation's scroll of honour have made their own and their country's fortunes on the waves, and those same waves which

shroud so many of our heroes will ever be to Britons the symbol of their beloved land.

Small wonder, then, that a nation which owes its traditions and present status so largely to the sea should take a keen and personal interest in the wonders of the deep. We can already muster a bigger number of popular books upon the wonders of the sea than can any other nation, but this at its best is but second-hand knowledge. Now we have a chance to see what really lies beneath the waves, and to enjoy it at our leisure any day in the week, from nine o'clock till dusk (to quote the Zoo's official notice boards).

When the visitor enters the London Zoo, he sooner or later inevitably finds his way to the Mappin terraces. There also is the aquarium. Once past the turnstile the visitor finds himself in a huge, semicircular, electrically lighted corridor. Above his head will be the mouflon, ibex, and Barbary sheep skipping on the Mappin rockery, hidden, of course, by the ceiling of the aquarium. Before him will be ranged, in some ninety odd tanks, the wonders of our ocean floor, to say nothing of our lake and river beds, and some amazing "extracts" from tropic waters. Now, it is one thing to walk round a zoo, and quite another to explore an *underwater* zoo. It is quite impossible, in most cases, faithfully to reproduce the natural surroundings of wild animals in captivity. It may be done, more or less, with ponds, rockeries, reed beds, etc., in a few cases, but in most it is admittedly "a wash-out."

With the watery world it is different. It is quite possible, as we have proved, to take a portion of a pond or trout stream and, putting it into a glass tank, maintain its character so naturally that all the animals and plants will realise their life histories as

happily as they will in a state of freedom. This also may be accomplished with many of our native sea-beasts. The plants, strangely enough, are much harder to keep in health and happiness than are the animals. Lastly, the hysterical type of humanitarian—or “animal lover,” as he delights to call himself—may be silenced on the ground of “cruelty.” The appreciation of pain, both physical and psychical, is dependent on the brain-power of the individual. In the highest of fish the brain-power is very low indeed; in lobsters, crabs, scallops, and sea anemones, brain-power, as we understand it, is practically non-existent. Consequently that sense of captivity which is sometimes, but not often, oppressively obvious in the inmates of zoos, never vexes the average inmate of an aquarium. For instance, a few years ago the writer kept a male and five female sticklebacks. In the course of eight months, or less, the male built his nest, courted the female sticklebacks, hatched out the eggs deposited by them in the semi-birdlike nest he had constructed, and safeguarded the young during the early days of their existence. All this happened, according to Nature's laws, within the confines of an ordinary biscuit tin. Not much sense of “captivity” here, at any rate, for not only did the sticklebacks complete the life cycle of their race, but a number of other creatures, snails, hog lice, leeches, worms, caddis, alder and other flies, did the same. Hence we may confidently look for a number of very “happy families” in the Zoo, living in wonderful blue-lit tanks, with rocks, weeds, and shells, all as they may be seen on any part of our coasts, and often at less than half a mile distant from the public promenade.

Having relieved ourselves of this very long-winded preamble, let us get to business and describe firstly what we may expect to see at the Zoo aquarium, and, secondly, how that aquarium is maintained.

The visitor will find the aquarium at the north or Polar bear end of the Mappin terrace, close to the ape house and monkey houses and western aviary, and directly approached from the main entrance on what is called the “Outer Circle” of Regent's Park. Entering the very modest doorway close to the den of “Sam” and the late “Barbara,” the visitor presents the Society with sixpence, pushes through the turnstile, and finds himself in a fern-decked grotto leading directly to a huge

corridor which runs round the whole of the vast curve of the Mappin terrace, 650 feet in length, containing numerous tanks. The small tanks each hold about 500 gallons and the larger 6000 gallons of water. The corridor is divided into three parts—salt water, fresh water, and a tropical section wherein freshwater creatures are shown.

In the salt water hall are shown all those creatures which look so flat and uninteresting on the fishmonger's slab, transformed into visions of fairy-like beauty. Let us, in imagination, pass along the tanks. Here are cod, not lumps of greyish meat such as we are used to see, but yard-long torpedoes lit with great amethyst eyes, the flabby piece of string which hangs from a cod's lower lip writhing and shooting in all directions, probing the ground, in fact, for stuff fit for Mr. Cod to eat. In another tank are mullet, delicious when baked and stuffed with forcemeat, equally satisfying, to the eye, when alive and darting about their rock-lined tank. Could anything be more lifeless and “plobby” than a fishmonger's sole? But look at him here, in a gravel-floored tank. His body waves and curves as though it were a spring mattress endowed with life. Moreover, each of his eyes moves independently, giving him an endless range of absurd and laughable expressions. Watch, too, his colours, how they change. When he is on the gravel, it needs a sharp pair of eyes to detect him. But when he flops sedately on to the slate floor of the tank, where some gravel has been brushed away, he is clearly visible, but only for a moment. Even as we watch, his brown-and-golden speckles turn to the slaty grey of the tank. Sometimes they turn quickly, at other times it takes an hour to complete the change; but slow or swift, it is sure and is well worth seeing—a perfect piece of camouflage.

Further down the corridor are gurnards, fish which you may see in piles at any fishmonger's. Here they are underwater butterflies, and in the springtime, when the gurnard turns to thoughts of love, the “wings” of the male show colours such as are not seen even in precious stones or the popular butterfly brooch. Also you may see them “walk” up the rockery like enormous beetles.

Next door to the gurnards we may find the John Dory. We all know “John” on the shop counter or the dinner plate. On the latter he is a charming fellow; on the former he is the picture of misery. But

here in a tank he is a marvel, a goblin of everyday life. His colours are never the same, and his mouth works like a telescope. Moreover, he develops on his side the wonderful "spot" declared by tradition to be the lasting testimony that the dory was the fish from which St. Peter took the piece of money to pay the temple dues.

And now we come to still greater marvels, the lobsters. The monkey house will have

and hermit crabs. The former dress themselves up in seaweed as a "disguise," and the hermits you see running about with borrowed whelk shells on their backs. The hermit must always live in an empty whelk shell, being but feebly armoured, and he is the low comedian of the sea shore. On any day in the aquarium you may have the chance of seeing him "changing shells." When he grows too big for the shell he is

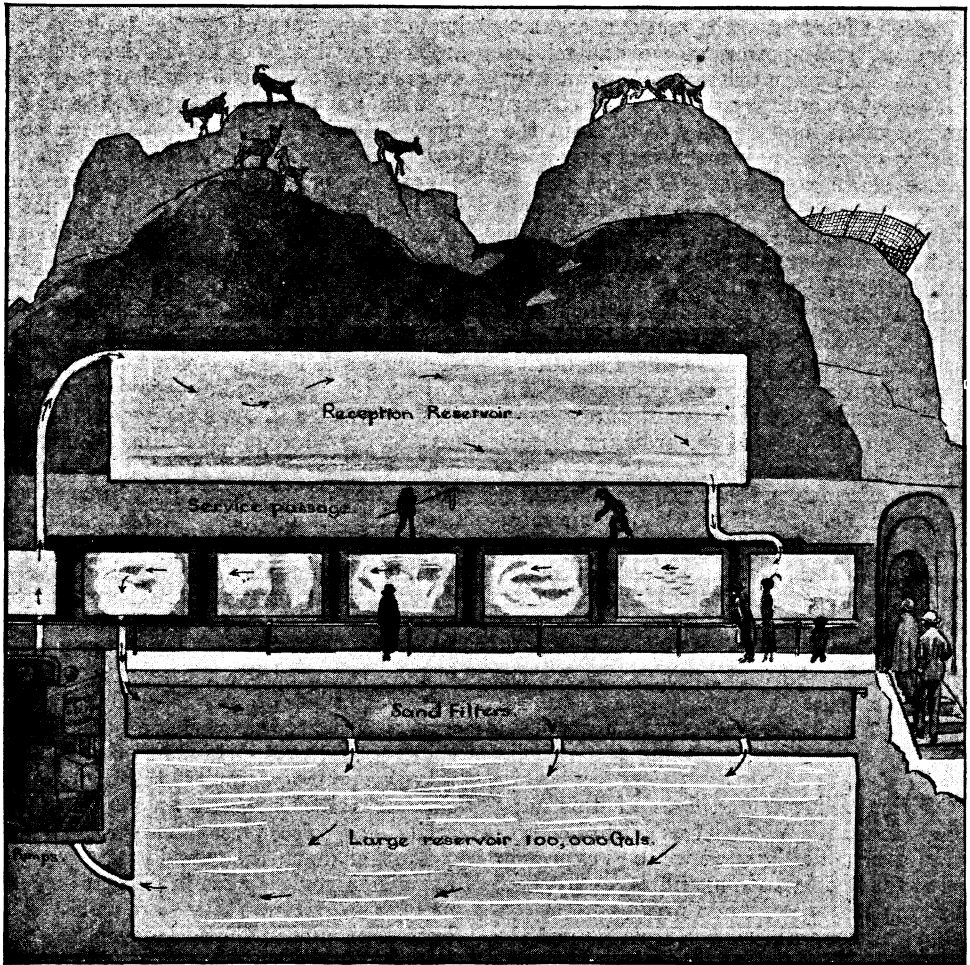
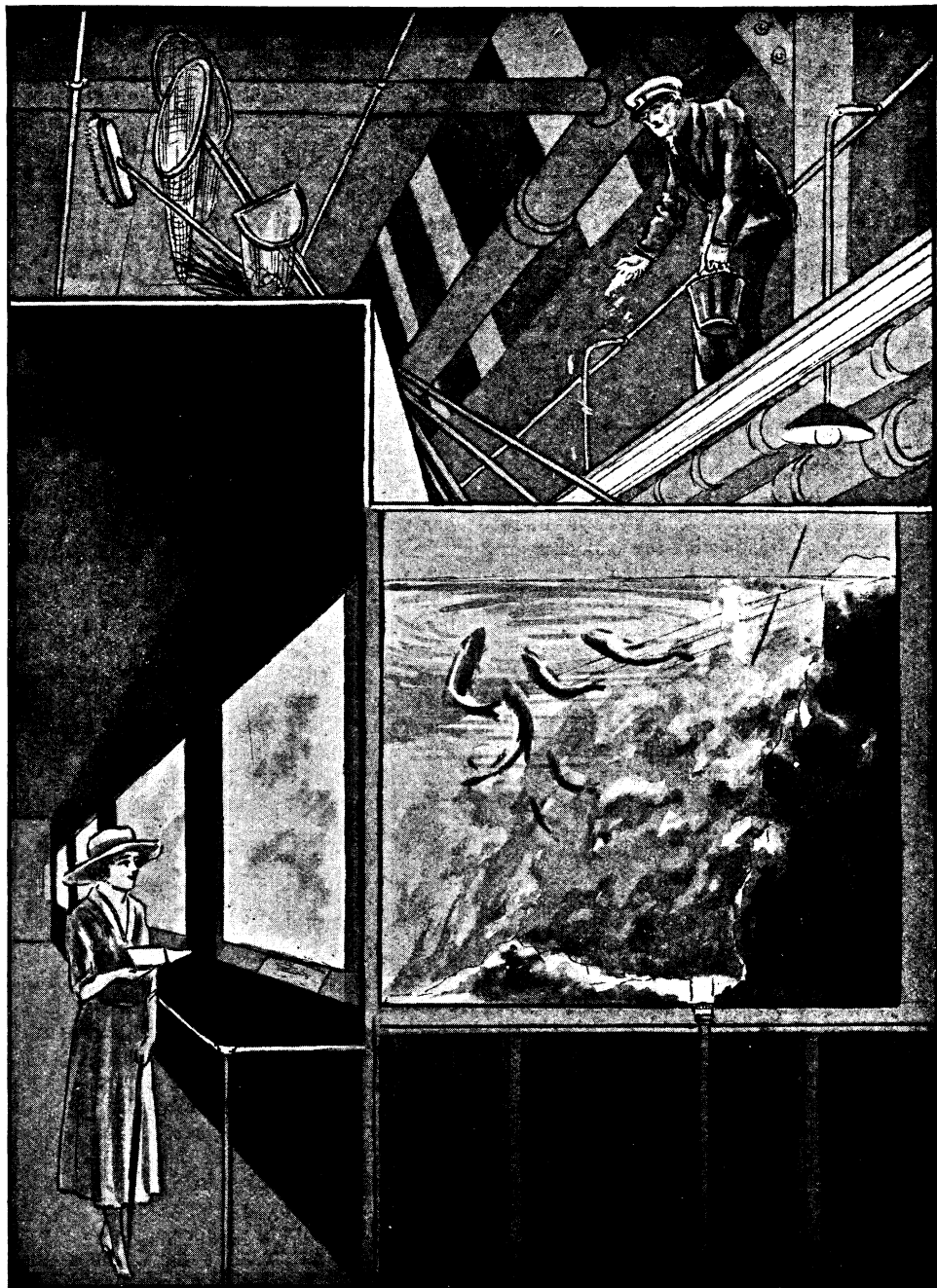


DIAGRAM GIVING A GENERAL IDEA OF THE SYSTEM ON WHICH A BIG AQUARIUM IS WORKED, THIS DRAWING CORRESPONDING TO ONLY A SECTION OF THE GREAT CORRIDOR WHICH RUNS ROUND THE WHOLE CURVE OF THE MAPIN TERRACE.

a serious rival in the lobster tank. Here you may see the lobster play a hundred pranks, his only rivals being his handsome cousin the rock lobster and the crabs. Crabs there are here in plenty and of all kinds—eating crabs, such as you see in the shops, common shore crabs, spider crabs,

occupying, he must change into another and—well, the "change" must be seen to be appreciated. In music hall language, "it's a scream." Of course there are plenty of sea-anemones. We can guarantee a tank full of these gems, and their glowing tints and strange habits are a feature the visitor



A TANK, WITH A SECTION OF THE SERVICE GALLERY ABOVE IT.

may count upon enjoying all the year round. Finally, we may hope to see the dread octopus and his relatives the cuttle-fish. They will, when present, eclipse all else, but are "kittle cattle" to keep, and Mr. Boulenger, the director of the aquarium, will not guarantee their appearance at any stated time.

In the freshwater hall we may see all the fish about which such funny tales are told in the smoking rooms of angling clubs. We shall now have a chance to ascertain the true dimensions to which fish grow, and always be able to quote the Zoo aquarium when we hear a fisherman's story. In the tropical hall are shown such funny

aristocrats as the lovely paradise fish, double-tailed and stalk-eyed goldfish, the "millions" fish of Bermuda, which so effectually checks the mosquito plague, and many others which till now have been kept in the reptile house, in which scaly atmosphere they have flourished and lived most satisfactorily.

Those who love the startling and sensational—and who does not?—will find enough to satisfy the most *blasé* "picture-goer." Two of the largest tanks are devoted to the turtle and the seal. The green turtle, which provides the *pièce de résistance* at civic banquets, and the hawksbill turtle—portions of which every wife, sweetheart, niece, aunt, and cousin wears, sooner or later, in the form of a comb—are helpless enough on land. But give them enough water, and they eclipse the swallow in its aerial flights. So is it with the seal. Ashore he is merely a mass of fat and flesh, afloat he is the last word in efficiency; his hundred odd pounds of bone, fat, and oil-soaked hide skim through the water as a bird cleaves the air.

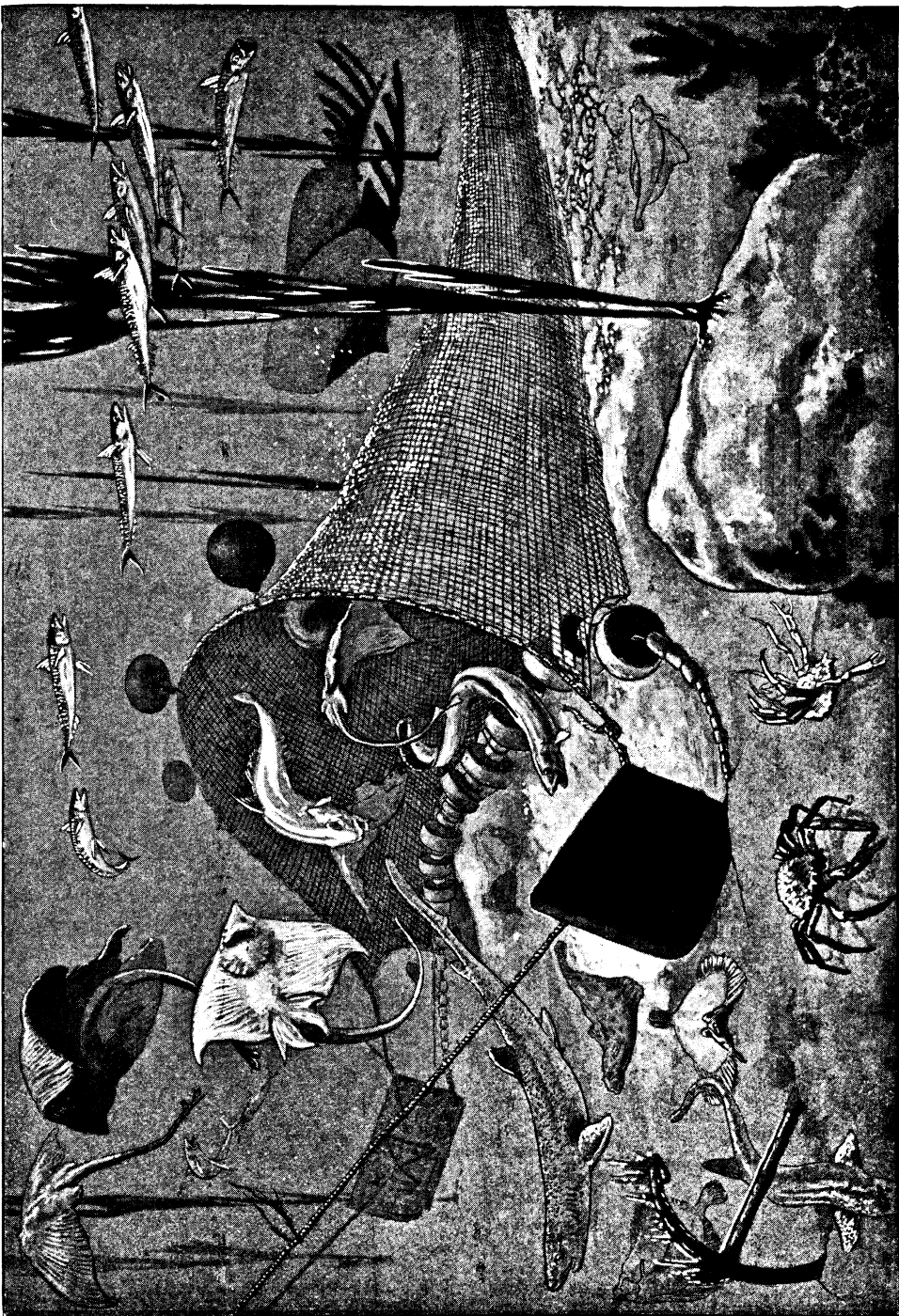
Though the sea must, naturally enough, provide the "star turns," there are many "runners-up" in the freshwater halls, especially in the tropical section. There the visitor will find the amazing "mouth breeder," a tiny fish that seems to have achieved at last the "ideal husband." The male "mouth breeder" not only hatches the eggs in his mouth, but calls the young in when hatched and threatened by danger, comfortably sheltering his many sons and daughters in his capacious jaws.

This, you may say, is all very well, but how is such an exhibition brought about, and how maintained? That probably will prove to many readers of scientific tastes the most fascinating aspect of marine aquaria. At any rate, its fascination is a very real one to the writer, who has had the privilege of seeing how exhibits for several of our large public aquaria are obtained. Almost every animal at the Zoo has a romance behind it. Those darlings of the public the chimpanzees, elephants, and Polar bears have, ere they reached London, necessitated wild adventure, cruel hardships, and wonderful fortitude in face of difficulties for the men who brought them finally to Regent's Park. So every fish that swims behind the plate glass at the Zoo must represent long days spent in mid-ocean, on yachts and trawlers, in sunshine and in foul weather. The hardly-acquired knowledge of many years, a mass

of complex apparatus, and unconquerable patience have gone towards their getting.

Nobody is wholly independent, and the men who run an aquarium are no exceptions to the rule. Regent's Park will owe much, not only to the enterprise of its proprietors, but to the efforts of private collectors, other large public aquariums, such as those at New York, Amsterdam, and Monaco, and those other well-equipped laboratories and aquariums which, situated at intervals round our coasts, are maintained under the auspices of the Board of Fisheries and Agriculture. Chief of these auxiliaries is the Citadel Hill Aquarium at Plymouth, the headquarters of the Marine Biological Association of Great Britain, superintended by Dr. E. J. Allen. Plymouth has two great sources from which it draws exhibits and other specimens innumerable for purposes of study, "Bill" and the *Salpa*. "Bill," otherwise Mr. Searle, has been with the aquarium some thirty years, almost since its foundation, and supplies nearly all the "small stuff," i.e., fish, shrimps, prawns, cuttlefish, etc., to feed the inmates of the tanks, and a mass of less well-known material to the many scientists at work in the laboratories. Here in the quiet cubicles, with their private aquarium tanks and searching microscopes, is carried on the work which eventually shapes our fishery laws, and ensures you and me, reader, a regular and unfailing fish supply. "Bill" does his collecting work on foot at low tide, or at high water in a little yacht, the *Anton Dorn*, where he works a trawl net, manipulates the sails, sorts the catch and lights his pipe, all at the same time, single-handed. The work of the *Salpa* is on a grander scale. She is a forty-ton steam yacht, beautifully equipped with a great variety of nets, a laboratory, work-room, and a series of baths and tanks in which the catch can be kept alive in aerated water, by means of running taps, until it is brought ashore. The *Salpa* is equipped to catch anything from a sand-hopper to a shark, may trawl inside the three-mile limit—wonderful privilege!—and may cruise for anything from three hours to three weeks at a time. She, or others like her, bring the huge skate, dog-fish, and other large exhibits that fill the tanks at Regent's Park. It is easy enough to hook or net your fish, and often easy enough to keep him in health when once deposited in an aquarium tank, but his safe transit from sea to aquarium is a very





THE FISH TRAWL AT WORK.

difficult task, far more difficult, indeed, than the transit of a lion or elephant.

The great bugbear of the aquarium keeper is the steady aeration of the water. With lake-dwelling fish there is no trouble, but river fish and sea fish must be kept in water that is constantly on the move, thus ensuring its being thoroughly oxygenised. To this end a large electrically-driven pump forces air into the Zoo tanks day and night, being switched off only for an hour or so at a time to ensure the cleaning of the apparatus. The aerating is not accomplished by merely pumping air into the tanks, but by forcing water into them—in fact, it consists in a constant circulation of the whole aquarium. In aquaria close to the seashore, such as those at Plymouth, Scarborough, Amsterdam, Naples, New York—in fact, the bulk of aquaria—this is fairly simple, since, if anything goes wrong a fresh supply of water can easily be taken from the sea adjacent, passed through the aquarium's sand filters, and so into the tanks.\*

London is a far cry from the sea, however, and the water is first brought from the Bay of Biscay in special tank steamers, emptied a few hundred gallons at a time into drinking water barges, and so conveyed by canal to Regent's Park. From the barge the precious sea-water is pumped (see diagram), via a 650-foot pipe, into a large tank high up in the Mappin terrace rockery, and from there the pumps force it into the show tanks, thence into the sand filters, and finally into the great reservoir beneath the aquarium. This tank holds over a hundred thousand gallons. Here the filtered water is sent, by the faithful pumps, once more upon its life-giving journey into the elevated reception tank, then to the show cases, and so on, week in, week out, for a year at least, ere it will be necessary to draw a fresh supply from the open sea. A good deal of home sanitation will go on in the tanks themselves. A regiment of crabs will aid the keeper in picking up any particles of food left over by the fish. In the fresh-water tanks at least a large and unpaid body of snails will do their best to keep the glass clean by eating all seaweed growths that may arise between the public and the exhibits.

The food supply of a marine aquarium,

though in no wise to be compared with the feeding of a zoo, presents problems enough when the aquarium is situated far from the sea. Skate, dogfish, etc., need lumps of raw fish several times a week. Cod and wrasse will eat almost anything, whilst plaice, dab and soles prefer shrimps and sand worms. The humble shrimp promises to solve several food problems for the Zoo authorities. Numbers of shrimps have escaped down the waste pipes of the various tanks, and, finding a last home in the sand filters, are there settling down to a life of quiet enjoyment. There, immune from fish foes, they should multiply exceedingly, so that in time the Zoo aquarium may, so far as the shrimp supply is concerned, look forward to being self-supporting.

The freshwater side is a comparatively easy matter. The warming of the tropic tanks, of course, presents no great problem, so that the whole thing goes, as Early Victorian punsters might say, "swimmingly."

Though an aquarium is all fishy peace and cold-blooded tranquillity to the eye, it is not without its adventurous side. The meshwork of apparatus in the service gallery above the tanks is no place for a clumsy man.

But worse things than a chance fall into a tank from the service gallery may occur. Exhibits have been known to escape, though this will be quite impossible at Regent's Park. The octopus has been known to climb into a lobster tank and do battle with the inmates, or, worse still, suddenly appear in the public corridor. At Plymouth a seal climbed out of his tank and did fearful damage amongst the fish, only stopping when he had eaten so much that he became temporarily *hors de combat*. Greatest misfortune of all, tanks may occasionally leak or even burst. The peculiar form of imbecility which prompts a visitor to cut his quite uninteresting name upon the glass is sometimes responsible for this. It may be merely a source of inconvenience where a small anemone tank is concerned, but when it involves a glass chamber holding a thousand odd gallons of water, seven tons of sand, and a score of nine-foot conger, it can become dramatic. We once watched such a disaster at Plymouth, where a whole morning was spent capturing the stranded conger. The proceedings were varied by the conger ever and anon biting the ends out of the sacks. This usually occurred when the keeper was poised, with sack and conger, on top of a

\* As this article goes to press, it is claimed that the "circulation" system of aeration has been superseded by a patent—at present a profound secret. Time will prove.



A CORNER OF THE ANEMONE TANK.

high ladder, between the damaged tank and the "reserve." The glass "fronts," by the way, are kept in position by the weight of water alone, and are only leaded on the *outside*!

London has waited long for an up-to-date and scientifically appointed aquarium, but it is, in the general opinion of zoological

circles, a case of "he who laughs last," etc. We shall gain from the past experiences, happy and otherwise, of our contemporaries, and be able to commence where many have left off. Mr. E. G. Boulenger is in charge of the aquarium, and brings with him a vast fund of knowledge, recently refreshed and augmented by a tour of the principal



aquaria abroad. In fact, we shall run the world's record—that of New York—a very close second. Of course, every good aquarium must be the best of its kind in its own particular country. We shall see at Regent's Park all those creatures native to our shores which the tow-net, grab, beam, and Agassiz trawl can bring us, and show them well. Other countries have other exhibits. What will be rarities with us may

be the commonplaces of Naples or New York, and *vice versa*. It may be some time ere we can compete with the latter and show a "school" of five porpoises, but if knowledge, hard work, and enthusiasm count for anything, the Zoo's "underwater zoo" should provide every kind of attraction to be enjoyed in the ordinary *terra firma* form of menagerie—everything, that is, except, of course, a "sea-elephant" ride.



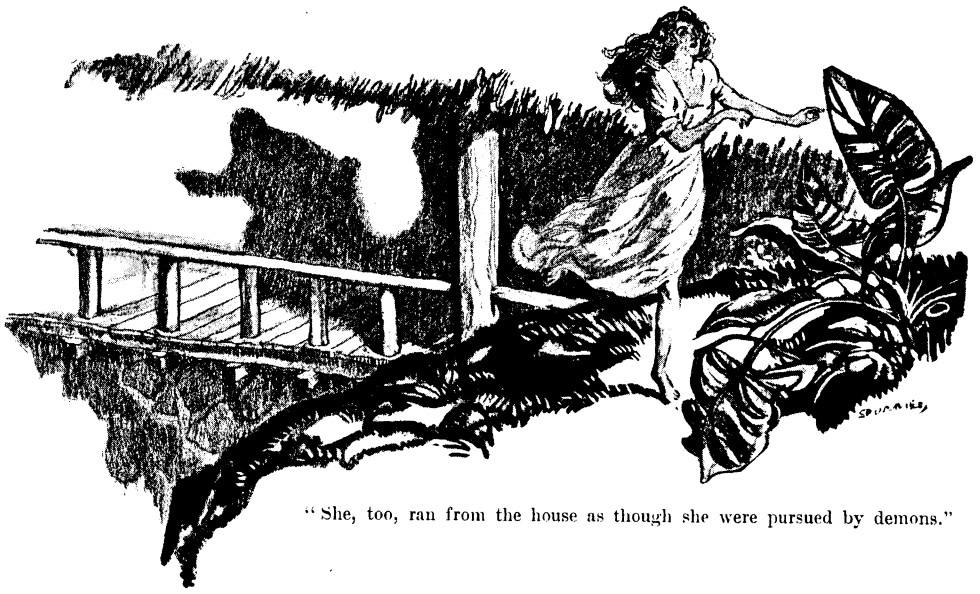
## GREEN STREET GREEN.

**T**HE 'buses run to Green Street Green!  
Come out and see the leaves unfold,  
The gorse's radiancy of gold,  
Where larks, from morn till night,  
Sing out of sight.

The 'buses run to Green Street Green!  
Come out and watch the lilacs blow,  
Beside the hawthorn's driven snow,  
And hear the songs of Spring  
The thrushes sing.

The 'buses run to Green Street Green!  
Come out when roses scent the air,  
And Summer's joy is everywhere,  
And hear the blackbird's voice  
Singing "Rejoice!"

L. G. MOBERLY.



"She, too, ran from the house as though she were pursued by demons."

# ON THE ISLAND OF GREAT CONTENT

By DOUGLAS NEWTON

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

THE morning made it seem nonsense. And yet this was the fourth time the vision had come. Even in the clear, sharp sun of his verandah Terril could not throw the memory off. He must find the explanation. Again he sought in vain.

Halif was hopeless. The house-boy did not even take from between his strong teeth the red flower that shone so deeply against his French-bronze skin. He smiled over it, through it, as one greeting an old joke. Only when Terril compelled him to reply did he say—

"But it is as I told you, lord. Nothing ugly has ever happened here. That is why it is called the Island of Great Content."

"But a long time ago," began Terril, "right back in the ages of your grandfather's grandfather, perhaps."

"No, we are always happy," said Halif, with unshaken complacency. "Nothing wicked ever happens here."

"But I tell you I know it," said Terril doggedly, and how well, how disturbingly he *did* know it! "It happened behind the jungle there, in the house on the Little Bay where the Sand is Silver. In that house——"

Halif was laughing. "In the house where the lord Guilda now lives—that is funny!" he cried.

"Why funny?"

"But, lord, it is the guest-house!"

"I know. And perhaps that is the reason."

"It could not have happened there at all," said Halif with conviction. "See, the guest-house is our place of greatest joy. Before the white man came, it was the place to which our newly-married maids and men went. Not even a harsh word was spoken there."

"Then it happened to white people who lived there," Terril knew it had. The people

in the strange experience had been white, he could swear.

"No," said Halif, "it did not happen."

"But look here," snapped Terril, "I know it did. I have—a white man told me about it." He couldn't bring himself to say it was a dream.

"He lied," said the native calmly. "Nothing wicked has happened on this island, and at the guest-house least of all."

"But you can't be sure?"

"Lord," said Halif, "I know. It is as I say."

Again Terril could get no further. Halif always answered the same way. And so had Tom Hichens, who knew these islands and their intimate histories better than any man. Hichens, too, had insisted that the Island of Great Content had deserved its name from the beginning of time.

And yet Terril had seen this ugly thing happen four times.

Had it been a dream? No, he could not call it that. He had been awake each time, that was certain, and the details—the few that were graspable—were too actual. It had been a vision. The things, the shapes he had seen were ghosts. The guest-house was haunted. And haunting—that meant that something had happened there in the past, and not in the remote past, either. The ghosts he had seen were modern.

He had seen it first about six months ago. He had walked to the tiny headland overlooking the Little Bay where the Sand is Silver in the moonlight. He had become half intoxicated by the sheer, dreamy beauty of the tropic night. It had been lovely. A faint silver mist seemed to buoy up an exquisite gossamer moon. The palms, trees, bushes and vines loomed delicate, fairylike, out of the mist. The mist itself seemed the visible perfume of the sweet, night-breathing flowers.

Yes, it had been as exquisite as a scene in fairyland. He had been sitting looking down at the little bay for more than an hour, enjoying it, when he became aware of an extraordinary thing. The windows of the empty guest-house were lit up!

The sight of the lighted windows in a deserted house filled him with a profound and paralysing unease. It was not mere surprise; it was psychic, frightening. He knew that it meant terrible things. It seemed to him that inside that house monstrous things were happening. He felt, with a decisive horror, that black evil was there. He felt it in his bones.

Then quite suddenly the thing had grown blacker, more terrible, so that his nerves screamed at the horror of it. He knew that a tragedy was happening. He seemed to hear quarrelling, then shots, but not with his ears, rather with his soul. He knew that someone had been killed, and in ugly fashion.

Almost immediately a figure sprang on to the verandah of the guest-house. He could see this man plainly in the moonlight, a wild, thin, tall figure, his tropic ducks flapping monstrously. He was a young man and white, and he was moving with the frantic abandon of an animal fleeing for its life. He rushed to the verandah rail, began to climb it. Then there was another shot. It came from the door on to the verandah, but Terril neither saw the flash nor heard the report—only his soul seemed to realise both acutely, horribly. The running man sprawled forward, then, tumbling in on himself, fell straight into the deep water that came up under the verandah there.

Terril heard himself saying—thinking, rather—that even if he wasn't dead from the bullet, the sharks would undoubtedly get him. He seemed to know that the man who had fired the shot, the murderer, had counted on that.

And for a moment he saw the murderer. A shadow had appeared at the door of the house, a big thick shadow it seemed, but, under the sun-eave, indistinguishable. For a moment this brute stood staring at the sea, then he turned swiftly and entered the house.

And the reason for this was the appearance of a third figure. It was that of a girl—a white, slim girl, with long hair floating, who came running from the landward side of the house. She was clad in a shapeless garment, a nightdress. And she, too, ran from the house as though she were pursued by demons. And Terril knew she was. He knew that the bulky man, the shadowy murderer, dare not let her escape. He was even then coming after her to stop her, perhaps to kill her.

Terril sprang up and ran towards the girl. He knew emphatically that her life and death depended entirely upon him. At his third stride his foot caught a vine and he plunged headlong to the ground.

When he scrambled to his feet, the Island of Great Content was as serenely peaceful as it eternally had been.

That was startling—startling and perhaps a little annoying, for it gave Terril the feeling that he had been a fool. There was no running girl. No ominous, bulky, shadowy

murderer emerged from the guest-house. The windows of the house itself showed blank and unlighted, as, of course, they ought to be.

He felt more foolish after he had gone down to the house and walked through its rooms. They were, of course, empty—and more than empty. They carried a suggestion, impalpable but emphatic, of not having been lived in for months, which was the fact. The very air of them helped Terril to go back to his house and strive to forget his stupidity in his work—he was the only white trader of the island—and in his hobby, which was botany.

He did not quite forget his experience, but he might have done if it had not happened again.

It happened twice before Guilda and his party came to the guest-house—that is, while the building was still empty. On each occasion the details were precisely the same. The only difference was that Terril did not run to the rescue of the ghost-girl in white, but waited to see what would happen. And nothing happened. On each occasion, and in the midst of her running, the white-clad girl just vanished. She went out just as the lights in the windows of the house went out. It was sudden, like the clicking of a switch—one moment they were, and the next they were not. That was all.

Terril was certain then that the guest-house was haunted, and that he had witnessed the ghostly repetition of a terrible and ugly crime that had happened there in the past. What other explanation could there be?

And yet he could not trace that old crime. Nor could he find any trace of likely actors in it. Nor could he find another man, coloured or white, who had seen what he had seen.

It was baffling, because he could not doubt the good faith of those who told him that no such deed had ever happened. Halif simply treated his supposed story as folly. So did Hichens. The old men of the island tribe, drawing upon their prodigious memories, could tell him about every human being who had ever lived in the guest-house since it was handed over to the whites. They could even go back unfalteringly through its history as a honeymoon home of their people. In no case could they implicate a man or a group of people who fitted his vision.

Yet there must have been a crime, hidden, smothered for the sake of the island's

reputation, maybe; perhaps even forgotten, or perhaps so secret that nobody had known of it. But it *had* happened. The sight of those wild and terrific ghosts made that plain.

All the same, though the mystery was intriguing, Terril dropped it. His insistence upon it was making the natives look at him queerly, and he was afraid of gaining a reputation which would ruin his trading. Also he realised that it was not good for a lonely white man—even though he lived in paradise—to dwell too much on such things. He dropped it. He shunned the cliff overlooking the Little Bay where the Sand is Silver, though it was his favourite place of meditation.

Gradually, then, in the course of months his strange experience had become not forgotten, but hidden under many layers of more practical matters. Meanwhile Guilda and his party reached the island and put up at the guest-house, and the memory of the experience was further obliterated by the realisation that Helen Condon, Guilda's cousin, had a quiet beauty and charm that made her different from, and more adorable than, other women.

Guilda's party consisted of four people, including himself. There was his uncle, Walter Condon, an old, lean, fretful creature, Gilbert Condon, his son, and cousin to Guilda, a tall, spare, morose fellow in the early thirties, and Helen, Walter's daughter, a girl in the middle twenties.

Guilda was manifestly the cicerone of the party, and it was also fairly obvious that they were travelling for the health of the two Condon men, particularly Gilbert's.

Guilda did not say this. A big, middle-sized calmly-moving fellow of urbane geniality and polished manner, he was discretion itself; but in an island where natives gossip with a cheerful and childlike candour, one soon gains a complete knowledge of one's neighbours.

Terril learnt that Walter Condon was a crabbed hypochondriac, whose fretful temper was almost beyond human endurance, and that his son Gilbert, either because he had suffered too long from it, or because he inherited his father's frayed nerves, drugged himself with morphine.

It was easy to assume that Guilda, like the good fellow he was, had accepted the duties proper to the nearest male relative, and had thrown up his most attractive life as a man about town to act as courier and male nurse to his ailing relatives.

His task was not an enviable one, if rumour and his own half-apologetic admissions were correct. Old Walter Condon was a bitter and savage old wretch, whose outbursts of virulent spleen taxed even Guilda's genial good-will. As for the son, Gilbert, the lash of his father's tongue drove him into outbursts of passion that

into admiration. He was, indeed, of the popular type, a very clubbable personality. His blond, slightly heavy, plump yet extremely natty individuality was instinctively "good form." He was one of those well-bred, genial fellows who seem to add an air of quiet distinction to club smoking-rooms. One could not help liking him.

He had a charming air of reserve and strength at difficult moments which im-



"He lifted the struggling Gilbert with astonishing ease."

were maniacal. Between the two Guilda must have had a very thin time; but he managed to maintain his good sense unruffled, and strove with all the quiet patience of a solid, good fellow to keep the peace and try and help the progress of the cure.

Terril guessed all this, for, as has been said, Guilda was not the sort to wash his dirty linen in public. And, guessing as he did, Terril's liking for the man grew steadily

pressed. When Terril made his call at the guest-house, he was rather sore at finding Guilda the only member of the party visible. He had most definitely hoped to meet Helen Condon. He had seen her on the road and on the beach, and had realised he must know her. Guilda had been hospitality itself, but he had made it plain that the Condons weren't seeing anybody. They were keeping very quiet for the present—resting, recuperating. No, he did not think they would

accept Terril's kind invitation to tiffin, not yet, anyhow. Their health—they must see what this lovely island would do for them first.

Guilda was gravely genial, admirable. He said nothing, but he smiled sympathetically, intelligently, and Terril said he understood, quite understood. Guilda had forced him to say that, though what he quite understood Terril didn't truly know. Tiffin with a quiet soul like himself would unbalance nobody's health. But Guilda had amiably cornered him. He had made it plain that there was to be no intercourse between the Condons and the world.

Maybe it was this suggestion of quiet, deep, and—yes, softly implacable—power that

Terril knew that he was not going to know Helen. He felt that Guilda, with his quiet strength, had put a barrier between him and Helen, between him and the Condons. The thing was decisive, and Terril was immensely impressed by the manner—it was more than mere words—in which Guilda had brought it about. But he was oppressed, too. Somehow the depths of Guilda's strength under his air of suave geniality seemed baleful; it gave Terril a sense of discovering a tremendous, unexpected, and perhaps dangerous force. He went away in a slight fume of antagonism. He wondered if the Condons, if Helen, were willing parties to this denial of friendship.

He argued himself out of that mood



"Terril found himself looking into the eyes of Helen Condon."

had led Terril to rebel, to say: "Well, Miss Condon's health is not bad, is it? Surely a relaxation would do her good."

"Ah!" murmured Guilda, looking at him steadily with his slate-blue eyes. "Ah, Helen, she is magnificent. A devoted soul. I don't know what I should do without her. No, I really don't know. A splendid daughter and sister, she gives herself utterly and unreservedly."

"You mean," said Terril, somehow feeling that an overwhelming force was defeating him, "you mean she won't come without the others?"

"I'm afraid," said Guilda, "I'm really afraid not. Such things mean friction, you know."

soon enough. After all, Guilda was probably acting for the best. He had his two sick men to protect, and no doubt he had learnt that meeting strangers was bad for them. Yes, Terril told himself, he quite understood Guilda's attitude; all the same, the un-

expected depths of the man's quiet strength made him uneasy.

Guilda obviously took it for granted that Terril understood. He came into the trader's store occasionally, and was suave and genial and the best of company. He bore all he had to bear very sensibly and without parade.

Terril knew what he had to bear. One day, when Guilda came in for his casual chat, he apologised for taking a peg rather stiffer than his usual mild "stingar." He said that it was one of the days when he wanted a little stiffening. That was all, but it was enough for Terril. He had already heard from the fluent tongue of Halif that there had been a scene in the guest-house the night before. Gilbert, flaring up in insane rage, had flung at his father and would have killed him in his drug-madness had not Guilda intervened.

"And the large gold lord, he smiled all the time as he held them away from each other," Halif had said.

"Yes, Mr. Guilda has wonderful patience," Terril told him.

"It is because of his purpose," said Halif. Terril did not think it queer that Halif should put it like that. Halif understood Guilda's desire to cure the two sick men. Terril himself understood it like that. That was why he felt great sympathy for the quiet, genial, resolute man when he said he needed a little stiffening.

He saw nothing of the Condons all this time. They remained in or about the guest-house. He saw even Helen far too rarely. He watched her greedily enough while she moved with a clean, easy lissomeness upon the distant beach and upon the road, or gathering the jewel blossoms of bush or vine. She fitted all this loveliness to perfection. It was something to watch her there in beauty amid this beauty, but it would be infinitely better to know her.

He was, he knew, in love, anyhow, with the idea of the sight of her. This was the reason why he resumed his visits to the little cliff over the bay at night. He went to look down upon the lighted window of the room she inhabited—it is the habit of the lover. It was thus he saw his ghosts for the fourth time.

It all happened as before. But this time the knowledge that the Condons and Guilda were really in the house, and that it was their lamps that lit up the windows, gave Terril so powerful a sense that this time the thing was actual that, as on the

first occasion, he ran to the rescue of the girl.

She vanished, of course, and Terril, stopping in his tracks, again called himself a fool. But as he hung indecisive, he *did* hear a scream, a man's scream wild in hate and rage, and it came from the guest-house. Another scream answered it, and there uprose a clamour that chilled Terril's heart. Something *was* happening, and perhaps help was needed—perhaps Helen needed help.

He ran to the place. As he leaped the steps towards the verandah he caught, through the oblong of the unglazed window, a glimpse of the brightly-lighted room. He saw two men, the Condons, father and son, facing each other with animal rage in their embittered faces. The old man's face was merely drily savage and taunting, Gilbert's face was frightening. If ever murder showed in twitching features and mad eyes, it was evident there. In a minute there would be killing. Terril saw the fellow make a stride forward, mewing in rage. His wild eyes flung round the room as though to find something with which to strike at his father—found and fixed on something. He took a step towards it.

Terril shouted. The thing that the madman meant to snatch and use was a revolver in Guilda's hands. Guilda was sitting holding it. A rag in his fingers showed that he had been cleaning the weapon, but he seemed to have forgotten that he held the deadly thing. He was looking up at the quarrelling pair, and he was smiling in his placid, genial way. Queer that he should smile, but no doubt he had found that the best way to soothe the others.

At Terril's shout Guilda started with extraordinary violence, jerked to his feet and swung towards the window. That was an almost fatal movement. The madman snatched at the revolver, secured it, and whipped round to face his father. He was hidden then by the wall as Terril sprang towards the door, his pulse racing and his nerves already wincing in expectation of the shot. It was almost as though he had interpolated himself into his own vision.

No shot came. When Terril was through the door he saw why. Guilda had recovered in a flash and was grappling with the madman. He had wrenched the weapon away and, with a strength that was quite remarkable in a man who looked more plump than athletic, had pinioned Gilbert. The old man, not in the least bit frightened, was

dodging close to Guilda's elbow, spitting venomous words into the raging face of his son.

"Keep the old man off!" Guilda shouted. "I'll get this one to his room." He lifted the struggling Gilbert with astonishing ease and bore him through the inner door. Terril held old Walter back, pushing him into a cane chair. Terril saw that he was all right, straightened, and found himself looking into the eyes of Helen Condon.

She was staring at him queerly, for there was fear beneath her reserve. Her eyes were questioning him and were uneasy. That and the fact that in intimacy her beauty was even more wonderful made him stammer as he explained himself. "I heard—well, an uproar. Thought something might be wrong, so came in to help Guilda."

"You're a friend of Rudolf's—Mr. Guilda's?" she said, and the unease in her seemed to deepen. It was that which made him cry—

"Only an acquaintance, the merest acquaintance. I'm the trader here, you know—Terril, Desmond Terril."

She stood staring at him. Unease had left her face, surprise was coming into it. Suddenly she said: "I don't believe what he said about you."

Terril was so startled at that that he could not speak at once. Before he could, Guilda came back into the room. He saw Helen, and for a moment he frowned. But even that could not obliterate the curious look that was on his face, or that Terril fancied he saw there. It was a queer, faint smirk of satisfaction, the look of a man who was pleased with himself, who was conscious that his cleverness was going to change a difficult situation entirely in his own favour.

The look merged into his usual pleasant calm by the time he was introducing Helen. He made no reference to the unexpectedness of Terril's presence, but he said of the madman: "He'll be all right now. I left him on his bed, sleeping."

"Injection, eh?" snapped old Walter Condon.

Guilda sent his half-apologetic glance towards Terril; he said softly: "Yes, I gave him an injection. I had to."

"Ought to have done it before. But that'd spoilt your fun, though, wouldn't it?" snarled old Walter. Guilda gave a good-natured little shrug, and let Terril have a smile which said "One must be patient with him."

Terril rather expected Helen to protest against the ugly innuendo of her father. But she didn't. She looked at Terril quickly and then dropped her eyes. That, together with her words, gave him a feeling that something was wrong, and that feeling translated itself into a faint hostility towards Guilda.

It increased when he said "Good night" to the man on the steps a minute or two later. Guilda was too smooth, too calm. Terril again explained that he had heard the uproar and had come to help.

"I guessed that," said Guilda. "It was good of you. But—er—we're rather used to it."

That was a snub—cased in velvet. His genial, easy, perfectly comradely tone was making it plain that Terril must not interfere again.

"Surely he's not usually as bad as this?" said the trader doggedly.

"Often worse," said Guilda easily. "There are times when Gilbert is an actively violent maniac—thanks to his habits."

"But I say, he was going to shoot his father with your revolver!" cried Terril.

"And nearly did, too, by Jove," said Guilda with a warmth that Terril felt false. "That shout of yours—well, for the moment I wasn't on the alert. I'm not usually caught napping."

Terril knew that he had been deliberately put in the wrong. Guilda was emphasising the fact that that shout, that interference of his, had nearly caused a tragedy. Again it was a warning to keep away, suavely put, but unmistakable. Once more Terril's impression of the fellow's unexpected depth of smooth power was profound and disturbing.

"You mean that—that Gilbert Condon has tried to do that sort of thing before?" asked Terril.

"Bless you, yes," said Guilda in a voice that was curiously purring, as though the man was immensely pleased at Terril's asking just that question. "Usually he tries it with a stick. But once it was a garden spade and once a knife. His father drives him to frenzy, you see."

"Horrible!"

"Very. But it can't be altered, either. He drugs, Gilbert—you know that, don't you? I guess our servants talk as much as yours do. And he's worse when the cure is on, when I'm cutting down his injections, as I have been for the past few days. His nerves are as brittle and



inflammable as tinder then. When one of the old man's black moods happens to coincide, there is the deuce to pay. Well, you saw what happened."

Terril returned to his house appreciating all Guilda had said, but quite unsatisfied by it. Everything Guilda had said was true enough, and yet somehow Terril was not convinced. He had the feeling that the smooth man had talked for a purpose rather than to explain things. What was that purpose? To keep him away from the guest-house—that was part of it, anyhow, but not all. Terril had a queer feeling that Guilda had also drawn his attention to the dangerous mania of Gilbert for some end of his own.

Why he felt this he could not say, possibly because he had sensed an antagonism between Helen Condon and Guilda, and had instinctively placed himself on the side of the girl. Guilda had, curiously, ignored the very existence of Helen in his talk. It was as though he did not want to encourage Terril to think of her, just as he did not want Terril to meet her.

In this he failed. Terril had gained an added desire to know the girl, and when he came upon her sitting by the roadside two days later, he deliberately reined in his pony and cried: "This is luck, Miss Condon!"

"No," she said, rising. "I knew you were riding from inland. I waited for you."

Terril was not so startled as he ought to have been. Indeed, he said as he dismounted: "You find I'm not really what Guilda said I was, eh?" He guessed the man had said something to keep them apart. As she hesitated, he said, smiling: "Was the character he gave me bad?"

"Pretty bad," she said.

"Will it disappoint you to learn that I am an ordinary mild trading citizen, with a meek taste in botany, no vices to speak of, and quite fit to meet socially?"

She smiled back at him. "I know that, Mr. Terril, now that I have seen you close and spoken to you."

"And yet he has tried to keep us apart. I wonder why? He's a baffling fellow."

"Yes," she said. "That's why—well, it's why I'm worried."

"It's not because you and he are——" He reddened and looked quickly at her.

"No," she cried quickly, "he is nothing to me. He's not at all the sort of man I'd——" She blushed faintly, deliciously. Terril, with a thrill, wondered whether he himself was the sort of man who would

mean something to her. "It's nothing like that," she went on quickly. "It's this keeping us apart, isolating us—and other things. They worry me."

"Miss Condon," said Terril gravely, "Guilda is beginning to worry me, too. Queer, because he is pleasant, genial, a good fellow."

"And you like him?"

"You don't?" he said.

"I think I hate him," she said, "hate him because I'm afraid of him."

"That's rather strong. Why?"

"I don't know. He's so pleasant, so smooth, so—so everyday, and then to find that underneath there is a strange, dark cleverness and terrific patient strength."

"For some definite purpose?" said Terril.

"You've noticed it?" she cried, wide-eyed.

"Yes, and others, too," agreed Terril, remembering that Halif had said practically those words. Realising, however, that these very words might have an ugly meaning, he continued: "Of course his definite purpose is the cure of your father and brother."

"Is it?" she whispered. "Is it?"

"What else could it be?" he asked, startled.

The girl stared at him, her delicate beauty tragic: "I don't know, either," she whispered. "That is—no, I can't say it. It's too horrible."

Terril caught some of her emotion. In that instant he realised for the first time that old Walter Condon was a very rich man, and that Guilda was a cousin.

"You mean," he said slowly, "he's—he's the next male heir after Gilbert?"

"It's too horrible," she whispered, and that confessed her fear.

"Tell me, anyhow, why you have even this—anxiety."

"There's nothing to tell. He came to help me when father and Gilbert were at their worst. Father's condition, Gilbert's drugging, had both come about before he came. I was glad of his help. He seemed so strong, calm, and sensible. He handled them so practically and firmly. I was grateful to him. He took charge of us and suggested we should try foreign travel for the health of both, which seemed the happiest idea. We have been travelling for two years. We came here because we learnt that it was so lovely, peaceful, and undisturbed."

"Its loneliness and remoteness appealed

to Guilda, you think, but why?" She hesitated. "Haven't the patients been getting better?"

"No!" she cried emphatically. "No, worse, much worse. Father was never so difficult, nor Gilbert so dangerous."

"How can Guilda be responsible for that? That is what you imply, isn't it?"

"I can't prove it," she said. "He's always so good-tempered, so patient with them, and yet, somehow, I can't rid myself of the feeling that it is he who stage-manages these quarrels. How? Well, you know how certain topics, certain subjects, are as red rags to a bull. There are things that father and Gilbert always quarrel over in a mad, reasonless, passionate way. Well, it may be sheer accident, but always it seems to me it is Rudolf Guilda who steers the talk to those subjects when father and Gilbert are in their worst condition. It is as though he touched them off at the very moment when they would explode most dangerously."

"Dangerously?"

"You saw," said the girl. "Gilbert snatched Rudolf's revolver and tried to kill father. And that's another thing—there always is a weapon to hand—accidentally!"

He stared at her aghast. The suggestion, for the moment, shocked Terril—it was too monstrous. He said quietly: "You mustn't even hint that sort of thing, Miss Condon. It's not good for yourself; your nerves will give way. After all, Guilda is trying to cure your brother. He's trying to cut out the drugging?"

"But you heard what my father said about leaving Gilbert too long without morphine?"

"The spitefulness of a sick old man."

"It's true, though," she said. "He cuts Gilbert off from his drug longer than he can stand, longer than is necessary. He waits until Gilbert's nerves are simply screaming with misery, and father's, too, for father tries to restrain himself, keep himself in while Gilbert is off the drug. Then, when they are both at breaking point, Guilda starts them arguing, and the explosion comes. It always comes, and one day——"

"Heavens," cried Terril, "but it's incredible, horrible! That can't be it. He can't possibly be so deliberate and cold-blooded. Why should he be? Where is the gain to him?"

"He is head over heels in debt," said

Helen in a whisper. "If he goes back home as things are now, it will be to poverty, and he can't bear poverty."

They stared at each other, pale and not speaking. There was no need to speak. Helen Condon had summed up the case against Guilda in those last words of hers.

They talked it over a good deal, talked it over with horror, and they agreed that something must be done, something must be thought of to put an end to this hideous threat, this ugly situation. The difficulty was to know what to do. They could not confront the man on mere suspicion, also to confront him might precipitate things. Talking did not help, and Terril and Helen went back to their houses without any definite plan.

It did not matter. There was no time to make a plan. Guilda made his first, and to the full benefit of himself.

The Government boat came in that afternoon, bringing the Visiting Inspector and the Chief of Police on their bi-annual visit. Terril had his house and his hands full for forty-eight hours. As the only white man in permanent residence, he held all manner of jobs from the consular to the police. There were reports to make and two good fellows to entertain and hear island and home news from. Frankly, Terril had not time to think of the Condons until the two pistol-shots startled him and his guests as they sat on the moonlit verandah. Then with a vengeance he remembered Guilda and the Condon men, and, above all, Helen.

He was away from the verandah, racing for the little cliff above the bay, even before his guests could exclaim. He was sick with the fear that something had happened to Helen. But on the cliff overlooking the guest-house he pulled up short and swore.

It was only the haunting again.

The vision that had happened on four other occasions was happening once more. The main drama was over. The long, thin man had fled, been shot and had fallen into the sea, and the bulky shadow under the sun-eave of the guest-house had vanished. But the ghost-girl in white was still running in wild fear. She was flying towards him exactly as he had seen her on four occasions. And it was the sight of her that made him pull up short. He had behaved like an ass again in taking this as a real thing, but this time he had performed the folly before other white men. They were coming after him, calling him. He turned

shamefaced to make the ridiculous explanation of his delusion.

And as he turned someone else called, the voice of a girl, and it was the girl in white. With a gasp he realised that this time she was no ghost. It was Helen Condon—Helen running for her life as the ghost-girl had run. With a cry he flung himself towards her and caught her fainting in his arms.

She was recovering on the verandah when Guilda came up. He was terribly perturbed, his genial creases and curves were limp with horror. He stumbled towards Terril's house calling, "Terril! Terril! Something awful has happened!"

Helen stirred and shrank from his voice. Guilda saw her, shut a mouth full of explanations, cried instead: "Helen, you here! Thank God! Thank God!"

"What has happened, man?" cried the policeman.

"But she has told you?" he cried.

"She's only just come out of a swoon," snapped Terril. "Speak out!"

"She may have seen it better than I," he said. "I saw little."

"I saw nothing!" Helen cried. "I only heard the quarrelling, the shots, the screams, and I ran—ran!"

"For Heaven's sake, tell us, man!" cried the Inspector. "The time you are wasting!"

Guilda seemed to have pulled himself together at Helen's words. He said with an effort of calm: "It's awful. There's been a tragedy. Those sick men I have care of—they've killed each other."

The policeman let out an oath, strode to the verandah steps. Guilda said: "They are both dead. It is all over now."

The Inspector handed across a stiff peg of Terril's whisky. "Drink that," he said to Guilda, "and tell us what has happened."

"They quarrelled again this evening, those two sick men," said Guilda, in a shaking voice, "in much the way you saw them quarrelling the other day, Terril. I was out of the room for a moment, and it must have reached the crisis then. I heard a shot. I dashed back, and Gilbert Condon had killed his father."

"With your revolver?" snapped Terril.

Guilda jumped at that, welcomed it rather than resented it. "No," he said. "I was careful of that—after what happened the other day. You know what happened, Terril. I had mine under lock and key.

He used a little silver-plated thing—yours, Helen."

Helen sat up. "How did Gilbert get it?" she demanded. "It was in my trunk."

"Heaven knows," said Guilda. "Gilbert was as cunning as a cat when he was in those black moments of his. Anyhow, he had it, and with it he shot your father."

"Where was Miss—Miss Helen?" asked the policeman.

"Oh, in bed, I thought," said Guilda. And that was obvious enough, for Helen was in her night-dress. "It was only when I saw her here that I thought she might have witnessed the deed."

"I saw nothing," said Helen, "nothing at all."

Again Guilda seemed relieved. The Inspector said: "What followed?"

"When I saw what had happened I sprang at Gilbert," went on Guilda. "He was mad—a raving madman. He bolted from me. He ran away from me on to the verandah. The rail stopped him, and I thought I had him, but just as my hands closed, he leaned back, half over the verandah, put the pistol to his head and fired. The shock of the shot must have toppled him over, for he fell into the sea beneath."

Again the policeman began to move. "We must get to him," he said; "perhaps he is still alive in the water or on the beach."

Terril opened his mouth to speak, and purposely didn't. He wanted Guilda to speak. He did. "No good, sir," he said. "The sea there is alive with sharks. They've torn the body to pieces by now."

In that sentence Guilda had condemned himself. He had given away his cool, cunning scheme. Terril saw it all. Guilda, under the guise of disinterested good-will for his uncle and cousin, had brought about the death of both of them in such a way that not only would he not be condemned for his crime, but the world would probably give him sympathy.

True, Helen might say that he had deliberately manipulated the treatment and the feelings of the sick men so that Gilbert was bound in time to kill his father in insane rage, but that suspicion wasn't evidence. All the real evidence was on Guilda's side. He had shown the greatest care and devotion, as many could prove; he had frustrated the son on many occasions in his attempts on his father's life. Even Helen and Terril must swear to that. He had built up his fabric soundly. The old man had had a tongue like a stinging barb,

the son was a drug maniac. There had been ceaseless quarrels, and some of those quarrels had been identical—save in tragic result—with the last fatal one. The tragedy had occurred in—for Guilda—ideally isolated circumstances, where no man or woman could swear to facts, though the cumulative evidence pointed to one end. He had even chosen the moment when there were representatives of the law on the island to examine his evidence and prove his innocence. Finally, the wretched Gilbert had, as Guilda had so profoundly planned, vanished into a shark-infested sea, where all evidence that he might give was obliterated. Yes, it was a perfect plan. Guilda had covered himself up utterly. Nothing could be proved against him—not even the fact that the wretched man had been shot, not in the head by his own hand, but in the back by the hand of another.

As that thought came to him, Terril stiffened and cried: "Good Heavens!" And the others turned and gazed at him, startled, as well they might be. Terril was startled himself. Gilbert was shot in the back. He saw it. He saw the *reason* of that haunting. He had thought it the ghost drama of some ugly deed of long ago. Heavens, it had been nothing of the sort! It was a haunting, not of the past, but of the future. He had seen four times the ghost drama of what had actually happened *to-night*. It was unmistakable. Everything fitted—the shouts inside the guest-house and the shot; the rush of the lank, drug-worn Gilbert to the verandah; the shot that had come after; the appearance of the bulky figure in the shadows—Guilda's bulky figure; the rush of the white-clad girl—Helen in her night-dress. Good Heavens! He hadn't been haunted by a past deed; he'd been warned against a future one.

"What is it, Terril?" said the policeman sharply.

"Guilda lies," said Terril, in a deadly, even voice. "This is what happened in the guest-house just now. Guilda goaded those two men to quarrel, goaded Gilbert Condon to madness, as he had done so often before——"

"You cad!" cried Guilda.

"Go on, Terril," said the policeman curtly.

"He had hidden his own revolver, as he had covered himself up all along," Terril went on, "but he had left Miss Condon's revolver about where Gilbert could find it.

He knew Gilbert would use it. He had tried to kill his father often enough in his mad rages. When the quarrel had reached the pitch of murder, he—Guilda—discreetly went outside, waiting for the shot. Then he rushed in and saw old Condon dead. One life between him and the Condon fortune had been eliminated, but the second life was not acting according to his plan. Guilda had counted on Gilbert turning the weapon on himself, in the mad horror of the deed. Gilbert hadn't. His crime had made him sane. He was staring down aghast at his dead father. He had dropped his revolver, I think."

"My God!" came the frightened voice of Guilda. "How do you—you can't know that!" The policeman moved to cut him off from the steps. Terril went on.

"Guilda was not dismayed by that, for more than a moment. He knew that he had built up a foolproof structure of evidence to clear himself and make the case one of murder and suicide against Gilbert. So if Gilbert would not kill himself, he'd do it for him, in complete immunity. He jumped for the revolver. Gilbert saw what he meant. Fear galvanised him. He turned and ran for his life. He ran out on to the verandah, Guilda after him. In his panic he rushed at the railing, clambered on to it, and, as he did so, Guilda fired, and Gilbert toppled into the sea. Guilda congratulated himself on that as he tossed the pistol after the dead body. The sharks would remove all evidence that Gilbert had been shot in the back. That's how it happened."

Guilda flung himself towards Terril, but stopped, facing him in a madness of fear.

"But you couldn't have seen it!" he cried. "You couldn't—How——"

His hand went up to his throat. He gurgled, swayed, and fell.

\* \* \* \*

The Inspector came into the room where Terril and Helen waited.

"He's finished," he said. "Heart-failure following that shock you gave him, Terril. Good thing, too. A clever villain like that is best out of it. My hat, he was clever! But, all the same, how *did* you know? How could you have seen? You were here with us?"

"I was haunted," said Terril, "haunted by the ghosts of the future."

With his arm about Helen Condon, he told them of his vision



"‘I shall never change,’ said Polegate meaningly. ‘Oh, but you must!’ Olivia protested.”

# THE ENTHUSIASTS

By DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

NO one ever really knew why Polegate and Hipwood had bought that country cottage of theirs, or why, having done so, they should go on living in it. Beyond the fact that they were both unmarried and both subject to sudden and violent crazes—though when it was old furniture with one, it was always birds’-nesting with the other, and so on—their common denominator must have been sought for in vain. Polegate was short, fair, and fat, and made his living by trafficking in bananas and brown sugar; while Hipwood was tall, dark, and lean, and had something to do with publishing. How, moving in such different worlds, they should ever have come to know each other at all would be enough to puzzle most people. But if asked to explain their joint occupation of that red-tiled cottage in the Surrey hills,

the ordinary imagination just sat down and gave it up.

The theory had been advanced by certain ingenious minds that at some unknown period in the past their two eccentric orbits, whirling madly about through philately and Christian Science and no-drinks-between-meals and first editions, had by mere chance met and collided at a point where their peculiar form of insanity was sending them both forth in search of the ideal home. According to this same supposition, they would have arrived simultaneously and excitedly at the gates of “Greenfields,” and there, each finding in the other such exaggerated symptoms of his own passing mania, they must have merged for the moment into one being. Thus, before either had a chance to discover the other’s fitful and meteoric temperament, the cottage would

have passed into their joint possession; and since the question of where they lived had within six weeks become of no earthly interest to either of them, there they stayed. The immense quantity of labour-saving devices which, in the restless enthusiasm of the moment, they had both ordered from London remained in their packing-cases in the garden shed, and during the first summer of their residence Polegate rose at five every morning to do morris dancing on the lawn, while Hipwood went to bed about the same time after a long night spent in identifying the heavenly bodies through his new telescope.

After this the record of "Greenfields" was almost monotonous in its unceasing variety. From Monday to Friday, except during the height of the summer, it was left alone in the charge of the gardener and his housekeeper wife; and from Friday to Monday the joint owners would set in, each burning to develop his ego in some fresh and unbalanced manner, and each paying as little regard as possible to any other person who might happen to be on the spot. When Polegate was filling the hall with butterfly nets and killing-bottles, Hipwood was locked into his bedroom, struggling valiantly with the intricacies of newspaper acrostics. When Hipwood was risking his life in the drawing-room in an attempt to master the art of wood-engraving, Polegate was up on the roof with his pockets full of insulators and a hundred feet of enamelled copper wire, trailing and writhing among the chimneys. And when Polegate was teaching himself Esperanto in the ingle-nook, Hipwood was dismantling his motor-bicycle—for the pure pleasure of putting it together again—in the side yard.

Yet in the course of months and years even the perpetual and violent enthusiasms of these week-end periods came to be accepted by all concerned as a natural state of affairs. The neighbours and villagers ceased to wonder when they saw Polegate, heavily draped in a green veil, trying to hive a swarm of bees at one end of the garden, and Hipwood nonchalantly practising his Japanese fiddle at the other. The eccentric hermits of "Greenfields" had established themselves as permanent and therefore unnoticeable features of the countryside. But—and this shows how little their association had really brought them together—on the rare occasions when they spoke to each other at all, they still used the formal titles of "Hipwood" and

"Polegate." It was only the gardener and his wife, in the protective and possessive spirit which they had come to feel toward both their employers, who referred to them—behind their backs, of course—as "Harry" and "Ned."

\* \* \* \* \*

There came a warm and buoyant Saturday morning in the early summer when the two owners of "Greenfields" rose, as usual on this day of the week, all eagerness to begin playing at once with their newest toys. Each of them had driven from the station last night with the inside of his taxi piled high with large, flat boxes, and each of them had, on his arrival at the cottage, found himself faced with a claim from the driver for damage caused by these boxes exuding moisture over the floor of the cab. Comfort, the gardener, had hardly concealed his anxiety when he was commanded in turn to deposit these burdens in a cool, damp place, for it seemed only too clear that his whole week-end would be spent in planting out seedlings under the joint supervision of his two excitable masters.

But, as a matter of fact, Comfort's fears were without foundation. For Polegate's boxes contained trout eggs packed carefully in moss, while Hipwood's had been filled with the spawn of the *Psaliota campestris*, or common mushroom. And without either purchaser of these objects having consulted the other in any way, Polegate was proposing to dam the little stream which ran through the bottom of the garden and breed trout in the resultant lake, while Hipwood—who knew full well that edible fungi can only be reared in captivity on a diet of disgusting and almost unmentionable corruption—was intending to cultivate his mushrooms in the shaded bed outside the dining-room window.

One's heart goes out to those unfortunate eggs and that unhappy spawn, both torn from their parents and exiled to a distant part of the country without any kind of preparation having been made for their reception. But it was so typical of the way in which both these maniacs worked that Polegate should have bought his eggs before making his trout-pool, and that Hipwood should have purchased his spawn before he had anywhere to put it, that it is difficult to feel any great surprise. We can only say that cruel as this thoughtlessness was on the part of both Polegate and Hipwood, it *was* thoughtlessness and nothing worse. There

was no vice, and there never would be any vice, about either of them.

As chance would have it, they both arrived at the breakfast-table to-day at the same moment. Polegate—who was wearing a pair of waterproof waders over his trousers—lifted the cover of the bacon-dish and, struck by a sudden thought, remarked :

“It’ll be nice when we have our own trout for breakfast every day, won’t it?”

But the upper part of Hipwood’s lanky body was leaning out through the window, and he made no reply.

Polegate repeated his observation in a considerably louder voice.

“What?” asked Hipwood, fetching his torso into the dining-room with a jerk. And then, before the fish-farmer had a chance to give his second encore, he rushed on : “I say, Polegate, I can promise you some jolly fine mushrooms in a week or so.”

“Eh?” said Polegate vaguely. “What for?”

But Hipwood’s eyes had suddenly fallen on his friend’s legs.

“I say,” he exclaimed, “have you bought a motor-bicycle? I wish I’d known. I could have sold you mine cheap.”

“These,” said Polegate a little coldly, “are waders.”

Hipwood sat down at the table and reached for the coffee-pot.

“About this hot-bed of mine——” he began.

But Polegate cut him short. “If there’s anything wrong with your bed,” he said, “you’d better see Mrs. Comfort about it. Bacon?”

“Thanks,” said Hipwood. “But what I meant was——”

“Sorry,” interrupted Polegate. “I’ve just remembered something.” And, rising from the table, he tore to the window. “Comfort!” he yelled.

“Sir?” came the voice of the gardener from without.

“I say, Comfort, can you lend me a spade?”

“Wait a minute!” shouted Hipwood, also rushing to the window. “Two spades, Comfort!”

“Very good, Mr. Polegate. Very good, Mr. Hipwood,” said the gardener. “Do you want ’em now, gen’lemen?”

“Yes!” cried the enthusiasts excitedly. And, forgetting all about the rest of their breakfast and their thwarted attempts to tell each other what they were up to, they hurtled out into the garden. Mr. Comfort

pressed a number of his other implements on both his employers, foreseeing that their inevitable acceptance would remove all possibility of his doing any more work himself, and the trio broke up into its component parts.

\* \* \* \* \*

Polegate began his day’s work by trundling the egg-boxes on a wheelbarrow to the scene of his labours, perhaps with the notion that their presence would inspire him, or possibly wishing to keep them informed of the progress of their future home. Then he took off his coat and waistcoat, rolled up his shirt-sleeves, hitched up his waders as high as they would go, and started ladling large lumps of soil into the bed of the stream.

At the end of an hour’s hard work a stage had at last been reached where these spadefuls of earth and stone were being dumped into place rather faster than the stream could succeed in washing them away again. Polegate took off his collar and tie and stepped into the water. He was delighted to observe the complete imperviousness of his new waders, and his pleasure was still further increased when he found that, working from this new position, the strain on his back was considerably eased. Slowly but surely the barrage continued to rise.

At half-past twelve he suddenly felt the need for admiration from an outside quarter, and though experience should have taught him to know better, he scrambled out on the bank and began to shout.

“Hi, Hipwood!” he yelled. “Come and see my dam!”

A faint and unintelligible reply drifted downhill from the upper part of the garden.

“Come and look at the dam!” shrieked Polegate louder than ever.

This time Hipwood’s answer was just audible.

“Come up here and see my trench,” he was shouting

“Pah!” muttered Polegate to himself, and it is possible that he might have added some stentorian retort on the comparative value of his own and his friend’s labours, if he had not at this point noticed that the stream was taking advantage of his absence to wash away the top layer of the obstruction which he had put in its path.

With a tremendous splash he jumped back into the water and, seizing his spade, endeavoured to repair the damage. More and more violently did he ram home the lumps of earth, or, lifting huge rocks from

the bank, wedge them into the side of the dam; louder and louder became the waterfall which his efforts were creating; and thicker and more turgid every moment was the trout-pool in which he stood. But there could be no doubt that once again man was triumphing over Nature. The water was now within three inches of the tops of his waders.

And then there happened that which the Fates had prepared from the beginning. As the heated and exhausted Polegate swung round with an especially large spadeful of clay, the slimy bed of the outraged stream betrayed him. With slithering suddenness his feet went from under him. He plunged forward to regain his balance, but it was too late. Down went his rosy head to the very bottom of the pool, while the waders, now filled with insubmersible compressed air, stood straight out from the surface of the water.

A few bubbles trickled lazily upwards.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the garden of her aunt's cottage, a little further down the hill, Miss Olivia Cunningham had been sitting for some hours, hating the country and the fine weather and the bees, and wondering if she could possibly survive the weeks of actual exile and implied disgrace which her parents had planned for her. In ordinary circumstances she was as tolerant of these rustic delights as any young girl who has once tasted a London season; but to-day, as has been said, she hated them all. For in a rash moment she had given her heart to a young man in the Guards, and it was a moot point whether this gift had caused more genuine annoyance to Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham or to the young man's colonel. In any case, the three of them had not hesitated to conspire together for her undoing, and although the ultimate results of this conspiracy were still undetermined, the immediate sequel had been banishment to Aunt Mary's. It had, moreover, been made unmistakably clear that no ordinary rules of decency should be allowed to prevent Aunt Mary from dealing with both incoming and out-going correspondence in any manner that she might choose.

And so, because of all this, Olivia sat by the water-lilies in her aunt's garden and let the fresh breeze and the bright sun and the scent from the flowers pass by her unnoticed; while thirty miles away a young Guardsman issued the kind of instructions to his company which only several hundred years

of regimental tradition enabled them to interpret without falling into inextricable confusion.

Yet, however remote one may consider oneself from the triviality of one's surroundings, there are certain phenomena which will force themselves on the most preoccupied mind. The gradual lowering of the water-level in the lily-pond, and even the constant arrival of bits of stick and earth and grass, had reached Olivia's beautiful eyes without penetrating much further towards the seat of her intelligence. But when a collar and tie came floating under the little archway at the end of the pond, even her hatred of all her surroundings had to be tinged with surprise. Was it possible, she wondered, that someone was bathing further up the hill? Or, since the size of the stream made this almost out of the question, was some trespasser signifying his revolt against modern laundry charges by doing his own washing? Or could it be—but no, surely her George would not have chosen such an unconventional method of sending a message to her past the blockade.

Nevertheless, this last romantic possibility did cause her to rise from her deck-chair, to splash about in the water with the point of her parasol, and eventually to drag both collar and tie ashore.

But the tie was without legend of any kind, and the only inscription on the collar was the maker's name and the size—sixteen and a half inches.

"Dash!" said Olivia, as the shadow fell once more over her young life; and she was on the point of throwing both collar and tie back into the lily pool, when the recollection of her plain duty towards their owner made her change her mind. She dropped her book, took a last glance towards the house to see that she was unobserved, and in another moment she was through the hedge and following the course of the little stream towards its source.

And thus it was that she arrived at the recently-constructed dam in time to see Polegate's waders, strangely distended by the atmospheric pressure from within, still waving feebly above the surface of the water.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Miss Cunningham, as this sight burst on her eyes. And then, since in everything except affairs of the heart she was a singularly level-headed young woman, she seized a pickaxe from the bank and, grappling at the nearest wader, began to pull. There was a brief struggle, a sudden explosion of bubbles,



and a scarlet countenance emerged from the soup-like depths.

Olivia let go of the pickaxe, snatched at Polegate's braces and began pulling harder than ever.

"Glup-glup-poo!" said Polegate.

"That's all right," said Olivia encouragingly.

"Guggle-guggle!" added Polegate.

Olivia heaved him a little further out of the slime.

"What on earth were you doing?" she asked in mingled anger and amusement.

Polegate sat up in six inches of mud, looked round at the world which he had so nearly left for ever, suddenly expelled about a pint of water through his nose, and then said:

"Who are you?"

"I'm staying with my aunt at 'White Gables,'" Olivia explained.

Polegate stared at her. It was the same expression, if she had only known it, with which he had stared at his trout eggs twenty-four hours ago—the expression which marked the birth of all his uncontrolled enthusiasms.

"You have saved my life," he said impressively. "Please tell your aunt to expect me for tea."

Olivia looked and felt a little puzzled.

"But—but I'm afraid I don't know your name," she answered.

Polegate smiled alarmingly. "Your aunt shall introduce us," he said. "Meanwhile think of me, if you will, as one of your greatest and most devoted admirers."

And with these idiotic words he scrambled to his feet, staggered slightly, and would have fallen if Miss Cunningham had not caught at his arm.

"Let me help you back to your house," she said kindly, for she attributed his last remark to the shock of his immersion and unexpected rescue. "You know you really ought to change at once."

"I shall never change," said Polegate meaningly.

"Oh, but you must!" Olivia protested.

"I mean——" Polegate began laboriously, but his companion cut him short.

"You can tell me what you mean at tea-time," she said. "Do you want to get pneumonia?"

"Not now," answered Polegate more mysteriously than ever, and they set forth together up the steep path towards the cottage. At the back door, where they parted, Miss Cunningham was spared any

further embarrassing imbecilities by the presence of Mrs. Comfort; also by Polegate's catching sight of his reflection in the kitchen window. He vanished after this like a flash of lightning.

Olivia passed round the corner of the cottage so as to make her way towards the front gate. Already the excitement of her recent heroism was fading from her mind; already she was returning, with the exaggeration of reaction, to the gloom of ten minutes ago, when quite suddenly there came a strangled cry followed by a rumbling sound as of gravel being shot from a cart. For a moment she was enveloped in a cloud of dust, and then, as this began to settle, she saw, about three yards away and protruding from a large mound of loose earth, a second pair of human legs.

"Good gracious!" she cried, looking up at the first-floor window; for her immediate idea had been that Polegate—unhinged by his recent experience as he clearly was—had flung himself through it with such force as to become partially entombed. But a second glance revealed a difference about these legs. They were longer and thinner, and instead of being encased in waders they were clothed in grey flannel trousers. Once again her level-headedness reasserted itself. She caught hold of the legs and began to pull.

It seemed for some time that she would never reach the end of those flannel trousers, and there was a horrible lifelessness about the limbs inside them. But presently there appeared a shirt, and shortly afterwards a stained and congested face, and as this face returned at last to the light of day, the legs gave a convulsive twitch and slipped from Olivia's grasp.

"Wa-hashoo!" said Hipwood, sneezing violently. And then, opening his eyes, he added: "Where am I?"

"It's all right," said Olivia soothingly.

Hipwood rolled his eyes in her direction. "Hullo!" he said. "Who are you?"

"I am staying with my aunt at 'White Gables,'" Olivia explained for the second time.

Hipwood stared at her. It was the same look, if she had only known it, with which he had stared at that mushroom spawn on Friday morning; but he was no longer thinking of mushrooms.

"You have saved my life," he said with some emotion. "If you hadn't been here when my trench caved in just now, I hardly like to think..." He stopped with a

shudder, and then added: "Please tell your aunt that I shall hope to call on her this afternoon."

But with her recollection of how the previous conversation had proceeded from this point, Olivia decided to ask no more questions.

"Certainly," she said. "And I do hope you're none the worse."

"Physically," replied Hipwood, grimacing up at her from the flower-bed, "I have completely recovered. But——"

"That's splendid," Olivia interrupted.

"I was about to add——" Hipwood continued.

"Keep it till tea-time," said Olivia hastily. And with these words she ran quickly down the flagged path and out through the front gate into the lane.

\* \* \* \* \*

At four o'clock that same afternoon the two doors at the head of the front stairs of "Greenfields" opened at the same moment, and Messrs. Polegate and Hipwood found themselves face to face on the landing. For an instant they stared at each other's unusually careful attire, and then Polegate remarked:

"Hullo, Hipwood! Where are you off to?"

"I am going to call on old Miss Cunningham at 'White Gables,'" replied Hipwood.

"So am I," said Polegate. "Or, rather," he went on, "I am going to call on her niece."

"So am I," said Hipwood.

"Why?" asked Polegate.

"Because," said Hipwood, "she saved my life this morning."

"Nonsense," said Polegate. "It was my life that she saved. She pulled me out of the stream when I was on the very point of drowning."

"Well," answered Hipwood, "she pulled me out of the flower-bed when I was on the very point of suffocating. I am going to offer her my hand."

"You can't do that," said Polegate sharply.

"Why not?" asked Hipwood.

"Because I had already decided to do the same thing myself," Polegate explained.

"But I am madly in love with her," said Hipwood.

"So am I," said Polegate.

"Oh!" said Hipwood. And again they stared at each other's clothes.

After a brief pause, however, during which they had descended side by side into the hall, Polegate spoke again.

"I have no wish to take an unfair advantage of you, Hipwood," he said. "Perhaps you will allow me to make a suggestion?"

"Well?" asked Hipwood suspiciously. "What is it?"

"It had occurred to me," Polegate proceeded, "that I might find some difficulty in speaking to Miss Cunningham's niece alone. Now, supposing we toss for which shall ask her first, and that the loser undertakes to occupy her aunt's attention until the proposal has been made. Eh?"

Hipwood considered this for a moment. "All right," he answered at length. "But if you win and she turns you down—as she probably will—then you must promise to talk to old Miss Cunningham while I have my turn."

"Very well," said Polegate, after a short silence. "But how am I to let you know whether she has accepted me or not?"

"I've thought of that," said Hipwood. "If you win the toss, you can take Miss Cunningham's niece into the garden while I talk to her aunt about the new vicar. Then, when you come back, if you say 'We've been looking at the potatoes,' I shall know that she's accepted you. But if you say 'We've been looking at the green peas,' then it will mean she's refused you. Is that quite clear?"

"But what if she says she wants to think it over?" asked Polegate cautiously.

"In that case," replied Hipwood, "you must say 'We've been looking at the scarlet runners.'"

"Potatoes," said Polegate thoughtfully. "'Green peas.' 'Scarlet runners.' All right. Let's toss, then."

He took a coin from his pocket and span it in the air.

"Heads!" said Hipwood loudly.

"You've lost," said Polegate, uncovering the coin.

Hipwood trembled slightly. "Come on," he snapped. "Let's get it over."

And they set forth together down the lane.

\* \* \* \* \*

The plan worked admirably. But, somewhat to their surprise, Olivia had given each of them the same answer. Twice within half an hour a blushing face had entered through the French windows of Aunt Mary's drawing-room, and each time its owner had made the same irrelevant observation.

"Hullo!" the enthusiasts had in turn greeted each other. "I've been looking at the scarlet runners."

And even the most careful and unashamed comparison of their two experiences, as they talked the matter over that evening, had left them without any idea as to which of their chances was really the more promising.

"I don't want to depress you in any way," Polegate said presently, "but perhaps

it is only fair to let you know that she asked me to post a letter for her."

"Pooh!" said Hipwood. "If it comes to that, she told me that she was having some telegrams sent here because the sight of them always upsets her aunt, and she asked me to take particular care of them for her until she could come up and fetch them."

"Pah!" said Polegate. "Any ass can take care of a telegram."

"Well," retorted Hipwood, "any fool can post a letter."



"When Olivia arrived . . . carrying a small dressing-case and looking full of nervous determination."

There was another pause while they glared at each other. And then Polegate said :

"In spite of your offensive manner, Hipwood, it seems only sportsmanlike to acquaint you that I have written to my office informing them that I am taking a holiday of indefinite length."

"I was on the point of telling you,"

"Well," said Polegate, with an effort, "if we are to share this cottage for so long, it would be a pity to let our rivalry interfere with its amenities. You will, I take it, have sausages for breakfast?"

"Thank you," said Hipwood. "Sausages will suit me excellently. And," he went on, after a short struggle, "perhaps you will allow me to add : 'May the best man win.'"



"Come and look at our early raspberries!"

Hipwood answered, "that I have just done exactly the same thing myself."

"My dear Hipwood," answered Polegate, "your generosity does you credit. And

perhaps this little holiday may do both of us good."

"I trust sincerely that it may," said Hipwood. And after this praiseworthy reconciliation they lit their candles and went upstairs to bed.

\* \* \* \* \*

On Sunday afternoon—when Hipwood had finished filling in his trench and Polegate had completed the destruction of his dam—the two friends called again at "White Gables." But though they had made more elaborate plans than ever for the equitable partition of Miss Olivia Cunningham's time, they were disappointed to learn from her aunt that she was lying down with a headache.

"Poor Olivia," said Aunt Mary, "has had a very trying time. I really think it would be a good thing if she made this visit a real rest-cure. I am strongly advising her to remain in bed for at least a week."

Polegate and Hipwood were unanimous in their disapproval of this scheme.

"But surely," they said as one man, "the fresh air of the country would do her more good than anything else."

Aunt Mary smiled politely.

"It is very good of you both to interest yourselves in the child," she said. "But"—and here she lowered her voice—"one has these little troubles when one is young, doesn't one?"

"You mean——" asked Polegate.

"Perhaps you haven't noticed it," said Aunt Mary, "but Olivia is almost dangerously attractive. And it is difficult to take these love affairs calmly at her age."

Polegate's and Hipwood's chests swelled. Although it was still uncertain which of them had had the honour of causing Olivia's collapse, it never occurred to either of them that it could have anything to do with a third admirer—any more than it had occurred to her aunt that she might be shamming.

"Ah, yes," they answered together. And then, struck by the same kindly thought, they burst out simultaneously: "Isn't there anything that we could get for her?"

"Devonshire cream, for instance?" Polegate added.

"Or port?" suggested Hipwood.

"No, no," said Aunt Mary. "It's really very good of you both, but I'm quite sure that all she needs is quiet and rest. Though if your gardener had any early fruit——"

"He shall have," interrupted the visitors.

"You see, we only grow our own vegetables here," Aunt Mary explained. "In

fact, I think you were noticing them yesterday."

"Yes, yes," said Polegate and Hipwood hastily.

And then they both rose to take their departure.

"Please tell your niece," they said, as they shook hands again with their hostess, "that we will send her down some fruit the very moment we can get it ready."

"I'm sure she will be very grateful," said old Miss Cunningham.

And with this friendly exchange the tea-party broke up.

\* \* \* \* \*

The two enthusiasts were both hard at work the next morning digging up all Comfort's strawberry plants and moving them into the greenhouse, when the grocer's boy arrived with the first of Olivia's telegrams. Polegate wanted to take it down to "White Gables" there and then, but Hipwood wouldn't hear of this.

"We'll send a note to say it's here, if you like," he answered. "But she particularly asked me, whatever happened, to keep all her telegrams here. She said that the mere sight of an orange envelope was enough to bring on one of her aunt's attacks."

"I must say," commented Polegate, "I was surprised to hear that old Miss Cunningham was so delicate. She certainly doesn't look it."

"I can't help that," said Hipwood obstinately.

"Well, perhaps I'd better send Mrs. Comfort down with a note," suggested Polegate.

"Thank you," said Hipwood coldly, "but I think you will remember that it was *I* who was asked to deal with the telegrams."

And he was on the point of leaving the greenhouse, when, to their joint surprise, a low whistle from the bottom of the garden revealed the presence of Olivia herself. They flung down their trowels and ran to meet her.

"For Heaven's sake, don't tell Aunt Mary that I got up," said Olivia urgently. And then she caught sight of the envelope in Hipwood's hand. "Is that mine?" she asked eagerly.

She seized it from him almost before he could answer, and ripped it open.

"Ah!" she said, with a sound of relief. And then, feeling in the pocket of her dress, she took out a stamped letter.

"Dear Mr. Polegate," she said bewitchingly, "I know you will post this for me."

"I shall be proud to do so," answered

Polegate, with a sidelong glance of triumph at his rival.

"And you won't say anything to Aunt Mary, will you?" she added, with the most touching air of anxiety.

"Of course not," answered Polegate and Hipwood together.

"And now I must fly back to bed," Olivia continued quickly. "But I'll come up about the same time to-morrow, and if there are any more telegrams, I know you will keep them for me. Won't you?"

And then, before either of them could answer her or could add a word regarding their labours in the greenhouse, she had slipped back through the hedge, and they saw her slim figure dashing downhill towards "White Gables."

The two suitors stared after her in silence, and then, with two lovelorn sighs, turned away.

\* \* \* \* \*

For the next three mornings this episode was repeated almost without change, and by this time almost every form of fruit-bearing vegetation in the garden, except the apple trees, had been dug up and transferred to the greenhouse. Hipwood's efforts with the furnace had produced such an intense and overpowering heat that most of the plants shrivelled up even before they had a chance to die in the ordinary way, while Polegate's experiments with artificial manures could hardly have failed to transform anything which had the luck to survive into a deadly poison. But their enthusiasm remained undimmed, and, amazing as it may seem, there was one indomitable raspberry bush which was actually putting forth small, hard, and pale-green knobs.

"To-morrow morning," said Polegate, "we will show her what we have done."

"I don't mind betting," added Hipwood, "that these are the earliest raspberries in the whole of Surrey."

"If it weren't for the possibility of my getting married," said Polegate after a short pause, "I really think I might take up fruit-farming professionally."

"It's curious," answered Hipwood thoughtfully, "but the same idea had just struck me."

"Oh, well," said Polegate, with a sigh, "I suppose I must go and post her letter."

"Sing out if there's a telegram in the hall," said Hipwood.

We see that the inevitable reaction was well on its way.

And so rapid was its progress in those two fitful and unbalanced natures that on the Friday morning, when Olivia arrived through the hedge carrying a small dressing-case and looking full of nervous determination, neither Polegate nor Hipwood took the trouble to come further than to the greenhouse door.

"Hi!" they both shouted. "Come and look at our early raspberries!"

Olivia approached them hesitatingly, and if they had been capable of noticing anything except their fruit, they might have seen that her eyes were fixed, not on them, but on the corner of the cottage.

"Sorry we can't let you eat this first lot," said Polegate, as she came still nearer, "but we're sending them up to a show."

"But there'll be any amount more later on," said Hipwood.

Olivia stood by the door now, wrinkling her pretty nose at the dreadful atmosphere inside. One hand played lingeringly with the latch.

"Come along in," the enthusiasts encouraged her.

But she still seemed to hesitate, and again she looked quickly over her shoulder. Then as her George came marching down the hill towards her, she spoke at last.

"I'm very sorry," she said, "but I can't marry either of you."

And with these words she slammed the greenhouse door and shot the bolt from the outside.

"Darling!" she added, turning and flinging her arms round her George's neck. "We must leave at once."

"But, my angel, look!" answered George, pointing to the steaming opacity of the greenhouse windows. "They'll die if you keep them shut in there."

"You think of everything," said Olivia adoringly. "But did you leave your engine running?"

"Of course," said George. "I did everything exactly as you told me."

"Then," answered Olivia, "I will save two more lives before I go, thus," she added, raising her dressing-case and smashing a large hole in the nearest window, "making four in all."

"Five, you mean," said George, as they dashed up the bank together.

"Six, darling," said Olivia, as she stepped into the two-seater.

The note of the gears rose higher and higher and finally faded into silence.



## THE GARDEN OF LAMPS

**W**HEN old wives gossip at the door,  
And lovers loiter in the gloom,  
The mystic lamp-man following them  
Taps with his torch the barren stem  
And fills each lamp with bloom.

The old wives gossip, but the shy  
Young lovers are not talkative.  
They watch the line of lamps take fire  
Of golden bloom above the mire,  
Too happy that they live.

The young are glad that they are young ;  
The old are sorry they are old,  
And sigh, remembering their old dreams  
Beneath the shining lamp that seems  
A giant marigold.

The night becomes a garden then  
Whose seeds are sparks in mystic-wise  
The lamp-man sows. The golden bloom  
To lovers walking in the gloom  
Seems dropt from Paradise.

WILFRID THORLEY.

# THE MONUMENT TO MARY

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY R. B. M. PAXTON

A WRITER seeks oases of rest between the novel just done and the novel not yet begun. I found one in the late spring of last year at the Waterloo Inn, Minster Inshore. On the third morning I was lazing on one of the green-backed seats in the front garden, with the inn behind me and a white chalk road in front and upon either side. Below, on the right, Minster Inshore Hill passes, reaching the level of the garden in the end. On the left, across the road, Minster Inshore Church and churchyard tower above on a little plateau. The ivy of the ancient walls had been washed clean by recent rain, and the lilacs and laburnums were in bloom.

A long-bearded old countryman, bent and leaning on a stick, and bearing a gardener's basket on his back, toiled slowly up the hill, pausing several times during the steep final ascent by the inn, where bicyclists get off and push their machines. Erect he would have appeared as a biggish man, and he was well-looking in his worn way.

The landlord came out as the old man was passing the front of the garden on the level, and waved cheerily to him.

"Morning, Monument!" he said. "You've got out again, then?"

The old man nodded in return. "Morning, Mr. Dixon! Aye, I got out again. Like a flower I be. Creep out to have a look at the sun! . . . Well, it do be rare good weather for the crops and for my little bit of gard'nin'."

"Ah!" said the landlord. "Been looking for you to come. You drop in and have one with me when you've done."

"Thanking you kindly, Mr. Dixon," the old man acknowledged, and laboured on. It was plain that he was stiffened by rheumatism. When he had rounded the inn, and was making his way up the steps to the churchyard, he rested at every third or fourth step.

"First time he's been out for over a fortnight," the landlord remarked, "and there he goes! Gardening tools in his bag, and a pot or two to plant out."

"He looks past work," I said.

"Aye. He's given up these two year; lives on his Old Age Pension, and an odd job or so that is put in his way—mending a fence and things that don't call for stooping. The squire allows the cottage rent free for his time. There's nobody more respected in the place than old Monument. He's going to tidy up his wife's grave, that's where old Monument's going."

"Why," I asked, "do you call him Monument? It isn't his name, I suppose?"

"'Tisn't, but he goes by it here. You'll get the reason best from hisself. Ought to interest a writing gent like you. Save you making up a yarn, perhaps. . . . Queer way to earn a living, faking up accounts of things that didn't never happen! Meaning no offence. He can tell a better tale than you'd get out of your lead. What you call a human document, he is. You talk to him. But mind you latch the gate. There's sheep grazing t'other side of the church, and sometimes they come round, and likely to fall and break their legs if they try to run down the steps."

I strolled up into the old churchyard—latching the gate—and in the far corner toward the cliffs, between a loaded lilac and a loaded laburnum swaying in the soft sea breeze, I found the old man squatting beside a long narrow mound, turning up the soil with a trowel and a small garden-fork. He was talking to himself, or to someone who could n't hear; or perhaps could.

"The plaguy weeds grow," he muttered, "if you leave 'em for a spell, as *you* know, Mary. I've been kept away by the rheumatiky. That's why I ain't been. But I'll soon have it tidied up for you now; and



a fresh coat of paint—Clark's only charging half price for it, Mary—on the monument, which is only temp'ry, as you understand; only temp'ry, as I've told you afore, my gal."

He shook his head at an object standing upon the grave. I had glanced cursorily at it, as I approached, and taken it for some gardening accessory. I am rather short-sighted, and hadn't put on my spectacles. Now I saw that it was a picture frame held up by two wooden supports—a home-made affair, but very neatly made and glazed. The frame had been painted with many coats in white. It was about a foot wide and two feet long. The middle was occupied by a photograph of a young woman sitting, with a baby on her lap, and a young man standing with his hand on her shoulder; good-looking young rustics, feeling very self-conscious in their best clothes. Above and below the photograph were inscriptions painted in block letters:—

MARY

WIFE OF SAMUEL HODGE

FOR 47 YEAR.

DIED 2 JAN. 1915.

NEVER FORGOT BY HER HUSBAND.

SHE LIKED TO SEE PEPLE HAPPY. THIS IS  
HER MONUMENT (TEMPRY).

"Excuse me," I said, "you are Mr. Samuel Hodge?"

"Samuel Hodge," he agreed. "Not to say Mister. And she was my wife. . . . Well, I say 'was'; but 'is' is more to my mind, if it's allowed. As I told parson, when the Book says there'll be no giving nor taking in marriage, I don't see as it means you can't stick to what you've got afore you come under the new rules; and he granted as the p'int was open to argyment. I'm for sticking to her, if they'll allow it. A good wife, I'd like to say, sir, as you wouldn't need telling, if you belonged here. It's not from disrespect to her mem'ry that there's no better monument. You'll notice as I've put 'temp'ry' on it. There was a young gent as said I'd left out a 'o'; but parson and doctor said there was no need to paint it over again, and Mary would read it easier as it stood. Her and me never said 'temp-o-rary,' we didn't. Noscholars neither of us. Enough to do without wasting our time on books, though evenings she looked for me to read a bit of the paper to her. The doctor always left his when he passed in the afternoon, and does now. So 'temp'ry' it says on the monument."

"I should be glad to think that some day I may be entitled to the same inscription," I told him.

"Would you, now? Mind you, I didn't put the 'temp'ry' from boasting, or to please myself, but *she* wouldn't have it thought that her husband didn't pay her proper respect. I understand how she'd feel; as much as a woman *can* be understood, that is to say. No man can quite, not after forty-seven year of her. It's her own doing, sir, that she ain't got a headstone and all that. I've the money in the Post Office to do it any day; but an ornery stone wasn't her idea. She had notions—notions!"

"Indeed," I observed, as he seemed to expect me to say something.

"Aye! I found out her notion about this here, when we were talking over the Burial Club, just before she went. She was sensible till near the last. The sense in her was nat'ral, and hardest to kill, I'm thinking. Mind you, I didn't start jawing of the Burial Club. Not me. Tried to keep her off it, and made out that she was pulling round nice. But there was never no keeping her off a thing! Not her. So when I found she was set on going into what I'd draw, and what I'd do with it, I could only let her run on, and make the best of it.

"'If,' I says, 'you've got to go, and me to stay—which wasn't never the way I wanted it, Mary, my gal!—I'll put you up a nice little stone; "beloved wife" and all that.'

"'No,' she says, 'loving ain't a thing to talk of to others. I'd like to smack them gals that go hugging before people, I would; and don't you class me with them.'

"Mind you, the old gal could speak a bit sharp sometimes; but she didn't mean it. No, she didn't mean it.

"'Well,' I offers, 'I'll put "never forgot by her husband."'

"'Wait till you find you don't,' she says, 'or you might come to look a fool!'

"'Look here, my gal,' I says, 'you know I won't go to forget; not after forty-seven year; and thinking to come to our golden wedding. You're up to your old games, you are, trying to go without things, so as I shall spend the money on myself. The same artful little hussy, after fifty year!'

"'No, no!' she says. 'What I mean is, I always had a fancy for a monument like the one to the squire's lady; an angel pointin' up, but more decent in her dress! I'll have that or nothing. But,' she says, 'don't you dare stint yourself to do it.'

If you do, I'll come back and haunt you, if it's allowed."

"'I wouldn't much mind if you did, my gal,' I says; but I didn't argy the p'int any more; only noted down in my mind what she'd asked for."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "she only said it because she thought you couldn't save enough for a grand monument, and she didn't want you to go without things to save for anything at all."

"Of course she did," he agreed; "and I wasn't going to argy with her when she was in that state; and not much use at any time! 'But,' I said to myself, 'now you've let it out, my gal, what's your idea, and told me to do it, I'll hold you to your word.' There's many a true word spoke in jest, sir; and she'd always had a fancy for stattery. She'd stand and look at the angel over squire's lady till I'd have to pull her away; and I knew it was the sort of monument she really wanted, though she pretended to say it in a joke."

"So, as soon as she was gone, I began to lay by for that there angel. Fifty pounds. Filmer, the mason, said was the proper price; but he'd knock off two shillings in the pound, and bring it down to forty-five; and he's stuck to that with prices going up. Forty-five he'll do it for. There's a picture in his book shows the very one I want; but I'm having a different 'scription and room underneath to put me. . . . Ought to have been standing here by now." He shook his head and sighed.

"Meanwhile," I said, "you have *this* monument to speak for her." I pointed to the frame.

"Aye! 'Tain't a monument in a proper way of speaking; only a 'pology; just to explain to her, and to people. I'd have had a bigger frame, and put the account, too; but Mary never could follow figuring; always left it to me. I've told her it's all right, and that will satisfy her, if she can hear; but I'll show it to you, if you like to see it. Seventeen pounds nine shillings and fourpence it comes to now. Got up to over thirty pounds once, but—well, I spent it as I thought she'd prefer. I ought to know her wishes after forty-seven year. . . . Forty-seven year; and looked forward to our golden wedding; but it wasn't to be. . . . You'll excuse me going on with my work while I'm talking. I've brought a few things to plant out. She was a one for flowers; took a prize at the cottage show sev'ral times; had the knack of it

more'n anyone I ever knew. I can see her now, a-fussing round her pots. Ah, she gets her flowers all right if she ain't got the monument."

"Is this the picture of what you spent the money on?" I asked.

"In a way, in a way, sir. . . . Her niece it is, and her man, and their baby. Takes a lot of notice the child do. . . . Yes, the money went on them, me having no other way of setting them on their legs. You see, I was hampered in laying by. Mary didn't leave me a free hand. Swore me to a lot of things that I was to do. I tried to get out of promising solemn, but when she made up her mind to a thing— There's nothing so obstinate as a peaceful woman, sir. Swore me that the first call on my money was to be myself, not saving up for to put a stone over her. I'd got to wear flannel next my skin, on account of the rheumatically; and I was always to keep a decent suit for Sundays; and not to give up my supper beer. Things like that she made me promise. 'A promise to a dying woman,' she says, 'that you can't break no more'n your marriage vow!' So I had to put those things first before saving up."

"Being hobbled like that, the fund—that's what they call it, ain't it?—grew slow. Sometimes I was tempted to set up a nornamental headstone and all that, and to explain to her as I mightn't last out for to buy an angel; but she wasn't one to be satisfied with something when she wanted something else, Mary wasn't. 'Twas like that when she went into a shop. 'If I can't have what I want, I'll go without,' she'd say. It was what she told her people when they wanted her to marry Drake what had the 'Waterloo' then. 'I'll marry Sam or no one,' she says; and marry me she did, in this very church here. Mind you, she never turned against her bargain, once she'd got it; which is how I account for the way she stuck to me, and never made no complaint; which she might have, for we were often hard put to it, and no children to help us in our old age. . . . Maybe she knew as I did my best for her. Grateful for kindness, Mary was. 'Thank you,' she whispered just before she went. *Her* thankin' me! 'And the Lord knows what I've done to be thanked for,' I says afterwards; and the doctor kept blowing his nose. 'You've been a good husband, Sam,' he says, 'a good husband. She often told me that!' . . . More consolation than anything the parson said, that was. . . . But

you was asking about this here temp'ry monument. . . .

"Well, as I said, the fund grew slow; but last July three year ago it had come to just over thirty pounds; and then I had an old uncle die—eighty-five he was; Thatcher, at Barstone-by-Suttle—and left me ten pounds. Forty-one sixteen it come to in all. Then I began to think things over serious, and talked to Filmer about it; and he says: 'Hodge, you're a man of your word. If you pay me forty down, I'll trust you for the other five as you can find it.'

"Suppose I go off before it's all paid?" says I.

"There'll be the furniture," he says.

"No," I told him, "there won't. The dresser was to go to my sister Anne, and the wedding-ring and bracelet to young Fanny, and the rest to Martha Judson. Them were Mary's wishes; and I don't go for to meet her in Heaven and have to own I've disposed of her belongings wrong. One of the first things she'll ask."

"Well, Sam," he says, "then I'll chance it."

"Thanking you kindly, Bob," says I, "but suppose the missus asks did I square up everything before I left? Wouldn't hold up her head in Heaven if we'd left earth owing money."

"No, no, Sam," he says. "There'd be no owing. We'll strike a bargain that, if you die before you've fini hed paying, I'll make the discount more; write out a fresh bill, and make it figure out at what you've paid, see? Is that good enough?"

"Well," I says, "it'll be good enough for the missus if she ain't learnt figgering up there; and I'll chance it that she won't have, thanking you kindly, Bob."

"So we settled I'd have the angel in the book as soon as the ten pounds was paid to me; and I went so far as to go over to Dilsham with Filmer, and see the actual thing in the mannyfactrer's place. Very fine it was, but I stood out for the robe—if that's what they call it—to cover up the neck a bit more and to come three inches lower. Mary liked things decent, and what she'd say to the way gals dress nowadays I don't know. She was one to speak out her mind sometimes. They tried to tell me it was the fashion nowadays; but 'What's fashions to do with angels?' I says. 'They don't alter; and, anyhow, Mary doesn't. When she makes up her mind she sticks to it, as you, Bob Filmer, ought to know.' So they had to give in about the robe, or

whatever it is. But I had to compromise with sandals (bare feet I would *not* have). They swore hard and fast as angels never wore boots or shoes, and parson stood in with them, when I asked him.

"We settled on the 'scription, too; but that was a ter'ble bus'ness. May you never have to go through it! Made me understand how people must feel that write for print, if you've ever thought about that, sir? There's lots of things that sound all right at the moment; but to have them took down against you to be stared at for always afterwards! And sure not to find the best, and wish in time to come that you'd found better words! Have you ever thought of that?"

"I have often thought of that," I told him. (I have!).

"Of course," he continued, poking the earth round a plant which he had just put in, "to be took down on stone is worse than to be took down in a book; makes you feel more responsible like. Books can be torn up, and a monument can't. What's more, people expect lies in print. Why, there's things printed that are written barefaced for lies! Stories they call 'em. And there's the cinnemy. I saw one at Shepley, when I went to my brother's once. There was a story about a bee-keeper. Sir, if you'll believe me, when they showed some of the bees large—it's a trick, *that* is, Mr. Innis that takes photos, told me—they wasn't bees, but wasps! Wasps! Think of trying to take folk in like that! Lie for the sake of lying, them story-people do! And I don't hold with it.

"Howsomever, we settled on the 'scription at last. It was to be much the same as the top part of this here, but finer words. Of course there was more space to fill up; and when you can prove yourself by a marble monument, you've got the right to say more, too. But they talked me out of one thing what I wanted to put."

"May I ask what that was?" I said.

"Well—talking between ourselves, as you're so kind as to take an interest in it—I'd never thought to come to foolishness; but there was two verses that came in my mind when I was listening to the hymns in church. Mary and me sang together in the choir onst, and often when we were courtin' and married. Nice voice she had, sir. After she went I never feel'd I could sing without her. Well, listening silent, the verses come into my head. Went with the tune of 'All people that on earth do dwell,' they did. However, parson and doctor said that they

thought they was a sort of private thing between Mary and me, and I'd better not have them on the monument. I had the

back of that card"—he pointed to the frame—"just for Mary; being a sperrit, she'll read through it as well as if they was outside;



"She gets her flowers all right if she ain't got the monument."

idee that they thought I hadn't learnin' enough to do 'em proper, and wouldn't say it to hurt my feelin's; and I wasn't goin' to make a gaping-stock of Mary's monument; but they sounded better'n some in books to *me*—more meaning in 'em!"

"Can you remember them?" I asked.

"Aye!" he said. "They're wrote on the

and other people can't. They went like this—

When Mary died, I soon began  
To feel I wasn't the same man.  
We shared for forty-seven year . .  
And she is dead and buried here.

I've left a place upon the stone  
To put another name—my own.  
Soon may I lie beside my wife,  
And find her in another life.

"I don't say the words are anything much; but it's the feelin' I think of . . . Forty-seven year is a long time. . . ."

"A long time," I agreed; "a long time to be a good husband, as she said you were."

"And the doctor said so, too," he reminded me. "He know'd we got on all right, and everybody know'd. We had our troubles, but they wasn't with one another. Aye, we had our troubles, and got through 'em together. Except the last. Seems hard as a man and a woman what's shared everything can't share the worst; when one goes. . . . I'm running on. That's the way with me when I get started. Like you start stopping a razor and don't seem as if you can stop. Mary used to laugh and laugh over it, when I was tidying myself up a-Sundays. Always kept a laugh she did; see'd the humour of things. She—tut, tut! There I go again! You won't want to hear about my wife, not knowing anything of her."

"Except this," I said. I pointed to the picture frame.

"Ah, there's no writing a woman down in words, there ain't. But I was telling you about the monument when I went skidding off. I come back from Dilsham with Filmer, feeling more cheerful than I'd felt for many a day, seeing as Mary was coming into her dues."

"You'll own I've done you handsome, my gal," I says to myself. "You never thought to have a monument like that when you married Sam Hodge. No, nor when you left him, neither."

"Almost chuckling I was when I went into the old cottage. Not as it was a laughing matter, you'll understand, and I didn't hold as any marble figger was too good for Mary. What tickled me was the thought that some day it would be over *me*, and strangers comin' would fancy some important gen'elman lay underneath!"

"A man's a man for a' that," I observed.

"Ah, that's what the writin' chaps say. Got their noses in their books they have, and their eyes. The chaps I've know'd as was always saying they was as good as anybody else wasn't never no good at all! . . . Anyhow, I opens the door and goes in; and there was Mary's niece Fanny a-sittin' in her aunt's chair and rockin' to and fro and cryin' like anything."

"Oh, uncle!" she says. "Oh, uncle! We're in such trouble. Can't you help us, for aunt's sake?"

"Eh?" I says. "What's the trouble, gal?"

"Well, she ups and tells me, beatin' all round the bush, as gals do; but I'll put it in a few words. She and young Dan had felt too big for their boots when they started, and thought as wages were goin' to keep up like they rose at the end of the War and after; and they'd furnished on credit—which I'd have a law to stop—and took a little shop, and bought dear, and had to sell at a loss, and borrowed on the stock. The long and short of it was that, unless they found about forty pounds, they'd be sold up, shop and home and all; and a baby a month old."

"Aunt would have been its godmother, if she had been spared," the gal sobbed. "Always treated me as her own, after mother died. Turn in her grave she would, to see us thrown out into the streets; and with baby and all—that is to be called Mary, after her! Can't you save us, uncle, for her sake?"

"My gal," I says, "I ain't nothing put by but what's for her monument as I promised her; been over to Dilsham this very afternoon to see about it. You wouldn't have me touch the money for that? 'Twould be robbing the dead!"

"Do you think," Fanny says, "Aunt would rather see a marble figger standing over her or me with a roof kept over my head—me and Dan, and the baby, her niece and yourn? Oh, uncle! Oh, uncle! Don't you recollect how she used to smile to see me laughing? She liked to see young people happy, she always said. You've heard her many a time."

"Aye!" I said. "Aye! I've heard her, Fan. You needn't doubt as I'll do what I think your Aunt would wish; but I've got to reckon out what that would be. This comes on me as a blow—as a ter'ble blow, my gal. You go and leave me to myself, and I'll come round to see you and Dan by and by. It wants thinking over—wants thinking over."

"I only said all that to get rid of the gal for a bit while I plucked up. There wasn't anything to think over. I knew well enough what Mary would want done. Very set on the gal she was; her only sister's only child. And Fanny was always round with her Aunt, and waited on her hand and foot while she was ill. 'Kindness for kindness,' Mary often said to me; and once I says—'twas about old Mrs. Scrutton, that—but you wouldn't know her—I says: 'There

ain't no kindness to give kindness for.' 'There's going to be,' she says, 'Sam.' Ah, she was a woman, she was! Sir, I went and knelt by Mary's chair when Fanny was gone. It wasn't for her sperrit to tell me what to do. I wanted to fancy her hand on my hair to comfort me. I knew Mary wouldn't trouble much about giving up her monument, but I did—I did! When I take things into my head, it's a work to get them out. Always hard to turn, I was, and sometimes no one but Mary could do it.

"I never had a chick of my own, Sam," I seemed to hear her say, 'and I called Fanny my little girl. We've had our time, Sam, and now it's the young people's turn. They'll be my smilin' monument, Sam.'

"Well, have your way," I says at last, 'my gal.'

"And then I seemed to see her laugh with her head on one side. Always kept that way till the very last, as if she was thinking 'I knew I'd get over you!' Kept wonderful young she did, wonderful young! Well, well, I dessay other people saw more change in her than I did.

"So that's how the money went, sir, and I don't want to say no more about it. Don't bear talking of, it don't.

"Mind you, I didn't give up the idea; but I saw it would take a long time to save enough up again, and me, perhaps, not last out. I started to put by the money for my supper beer, but had a dream as she came to me about it and told me off fine and proper. Parson may say what he likes, but I don't call it a dream.

"So I took to the supper beer again; but the doctor and the parson and the squire being very good to me, and Mr. Dixon at 'The Waterloo,' I found other ways to scrape up a bit again. And I've got to seventeen pound odd, as I told you. But I doubt that's about as far as I'll ever get. For the rheumaticky has got me fair. If it weren't for them vests and pants as doctor bought for himself and gave me new because they was too big for him, I'd never have lasted through this winter, I wouldn't.

"So, seeing as she mightn't never get the monument that I meant her to have, I put up this here temp'ry. . . . And the young people are pulling round, and the baby's doing well; and a mischievous little rascal it is, and called after *her*. Mary Eileen Patricia it is, and called Dots! And there's the three of 'em smiling and happy. I don't know as they ain't her best monument.

When she was alive she always put other people before herself, and if she's altered in that now she's dead, I shan't hardly know her when the time comes."

I told old Samuel that I thought his temp'ry angel a finer monument to his wife than any angel that was ever chiselled; but in my heart I thought he ought to see the marble angel standing there. The squire and the doctor and the parson called that evening to offer the generous hospitality of Minster Inshore to the stranger, and I spoke about the angel to them and to the landlord.

"Can't we get up a subscription?" I suggested. "I'll give my share."

They looked at each other.

"As a matter of fact," the squire said, "the subscription was got up long ago."

"Then," I asked, "where's the monument to Mary?"

"It walks about," the landlord said, "on old Sam's back, and inside him, though he doesn't know. A proud man old Sam is, and wouldn't take charity. A rare trouble we have to make up jobs, and let him think he earns what we give him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The last words she said to me," the doctor remarked, "were, 'Don't you let him fool away his money on monuments, and that for a dead old woman, doctor; and don't you fool away yours on helping him to do it. *Do what you can for Sam!* That'll be the best monument to me.' . . . A sensible woman, and a good woman, as they go."

"She was," the parson said, "a *very* good woman. We all felt that we wished to keep her memory green; but the best memorial to her seemed to us to be to help her husband to live out of the workhouse and in some comfort. It is the monument which would have most pleased her."

"I was thinking," I said, "of what would most please *him*!"

"Ah!" said the landlord.

"Ah!" said the doctor and parson.

"I see your point," said the squire. "I see your point. What do you think about it, friends?"

\* \* \* \* \*

That was how it came about that Mr. Samuel Hodge received a legacy from a cousin in Australia, whom he "couldn't rightly call to mind," and that in Minster Inshore churchyard, in the far corner toward the cliffs, between a lilac and a laburnum, a marble angel now points to the skies.

Samuel Hodge often stands before it and rubs his hands and nods at the vacant lower half of the inscription stone.

"I'm ready to be writ on it," he says, "whenever the Lord pleases to think it

time; and I've told them to put this after my name—

WHO WENT WILLING ON—TO REJOIN HER  
I sometimes think that this will be the finest part of the monument to Mary.

## FROM ITALY.

I HAVE a longing to be home again,  
To see fat kingcups in a plashy mead,  
Low wooded hills half hidden by the rain,  
And hear the tear of grass where cattle feed;  
To see still water wind where willows lean  
And blackthorn trails its boughs a-bud with green.

Rosy with sap the slender willow wand,  
The yellow duckling broods are hatched and out,  
In feathered fleets they flounder to the pond,  
Much shepherded by parent birds about;  
A leggy foal shies sideways as you pass  
And whisks away across the daisied grass.

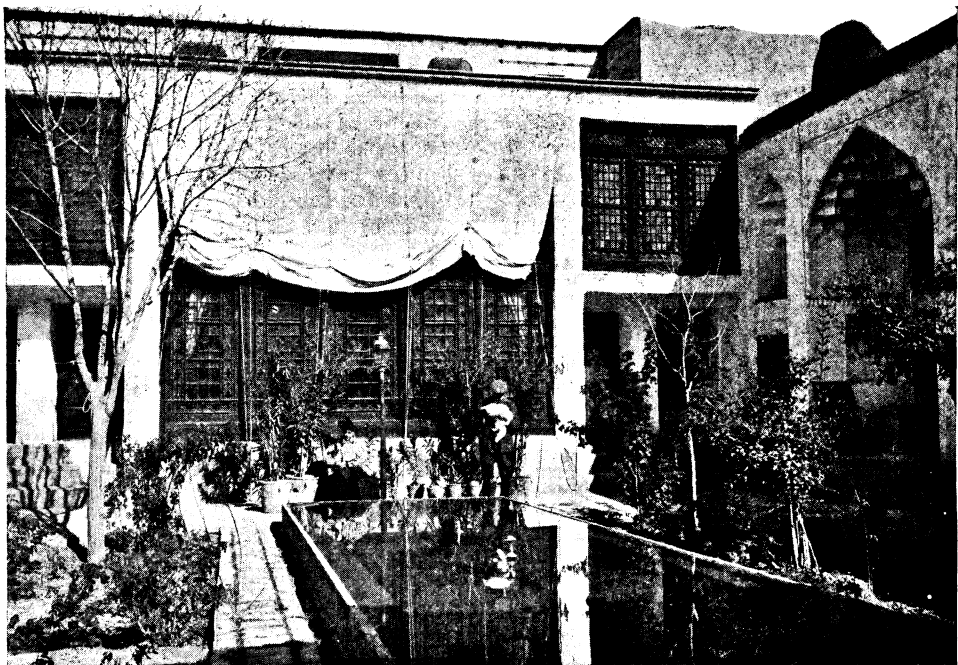
The parent birds are busy with their brood,  
And all's a-twitter in the hedgerow now,  
Where gaping beaks cheep hungrily for food;  
A baby calf and meditative cow,  
In silent contemplation chewing grass,  
Gaze solemnly upon you as you pass.

From open sunlight into patterned sun,  
Shadowed by interlacing twig and bough,  
Follow a path where startled rabbits run,  
The April woods are pale with primrose now;  
Fare deeper in the wood and you will find  
Expectant stillness of enchanted kind.

Only a nervous squeak, the brush of wings,  
Sharp snapping twigs, dead leaves that rustle dry;  
High in the lichened elm the chaffinch sings  
To cleave the silent wonder of the sky;  
Or running water chatters in its fall  
To break the spell of magic over all.

Have I not seen the spring where olives grow,  
Clustering round the feet of hill-top towns?  
Yet am I thoughtful of the land I know,  
The woodlands and the meadows and the Downs,  
This year an English April passes by  
And leaves me stranger 'neath a Tuscan sky.

MARIAN ALLEN.



A "HAYAT," OR ENCLOSED GARDEN, AT ISFAHAN.

# PERSIAN GARDENS AND THEIR POETS

By J. HORNE

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,  
And Jamshyd's seven-ring'd Cup where no one knows ;  
But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,  
And still a Garden by the Water blows.—

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM.

**A** GARDEN by the water! How much does Old Khayyam manage to convey by those five magic words—how much and how little! Yet what could be more familiar than a Persian garden, even to those of us whose "Furthest East" has been but the coast of our islands? We all know it, for poets have described it—that garden where it is always moonlight, where the fountain ever babbles and the nightingale ever sings, and the air is filled with the scent of strange flowers. Musicians have pictured it with marvellous chords, with scales that astound in their daring, and motifs like the twinkle of stars in a purple night. It has been painted in all its enchantment, with its pale marble pathway, flanked by darkest cypresses, that leads to a distant

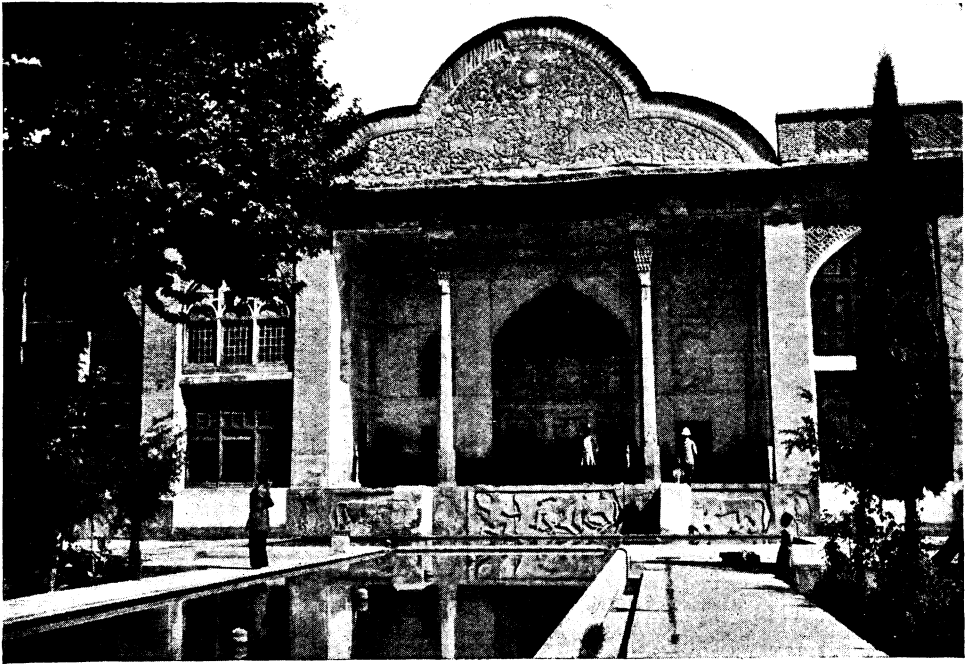
palace of iridescent domes, each crowned by a golden crescent. Why prolong the list? With such an array of Persian gardens one might well believe that nothing remains for us to learn. But in every fantasy there is a grain of truth, and we must not decry the art of those who would simply appeal to the romantic side of our nature. The fact that the reality is not quite the garden of our imagination will make it none the less charming, and need not exile us from the fairyland created by Edmund Dulac and Arthur Rackham.

In Western countries gardens vary infinitely in sentiment and expression of thought. They are often a very personal affair, reflecting clearly the character of their maker and his special tastes. Or, again, they are carefully adapted to the type of country surrounding them, or to the views which they command. But in such an arid country as Persia, gardens—in fact, all trees



and flowers—have a value and a meaning which we can hardly appreciate, for they represent the one power that makes all else possible in a land almost devoid of rivers, namely, water. "A Garden by the Water"—Omar carefully emphasises the fact—and therefore shade, flowers, and fruit. The question naturally follows, where in Persia are the most typically Persian gardens to be found? Teheran and the north generally have but little to offer, and it is in the two cities that are held most famous for their beauty and their poetry, Isfahan in the

bidden his friends to spend a summer evening in the garden, they wait for that moment in the late afternoon when the bazaar has lost its midday coolness and the sleepers have awakened, and the air is stifling and the flies intolerable. And then, rather earlier than usual, they close the shutters of their cupboard-like shops and, having secured the heavy bolts and padlocks, wend their way through the glare of the dusty streets and out along narrow paths that zigzag among the watercourses till, almost at the end of cultivation, they reach



THE "EYVAN," OR VERANDAH, IN THE GARDEN OF THE PALACE OF THE ZELLI-US-SULTAN AT ISFAHAN.

centre and Shiraz in the south, that we are more likely to find what we seek.

The Persians have a proverb "*Isfahan Nesfa Jahan*" ("Isfahan is half the world"), to which India did not hesitate to reply, "*Agar Lahore naboude*" ("If Lahore did not exist"), indicating a rivalry between the two towns that must certainly have included their gardens. But for the moment, only Isfahan concerns us, and I will first describe the garden of one of its poorer merchants.

Persian towns are nearly always surrounded by an irrigated area of more or less importance, and it is probable that the chosen spot will be somewhere within this limit. And so, when the merchant has

an enclosure surrounded by a wall of sun-dried bricks in which there is a gate. It is the garden. Once inside the poet will lead

With me along some strip of herbage strown,  
That just divides the desert from the sown—

though Omar forgets to tell of all the "strip of herbage" contains—of the peaches and apricots, the figs and the pomegranates, and the tangled but so sweetly scented oleanders. Roses the poet always remembers—who could forget them in Isfahan?—and in this garden they grow just as Nature will have them grow, with the unfettered grace that made him exclaim:

Look to the Rose that blows about us—"Lo,  
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow  
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its treasure on the Garden throw."

Along the wall the wild geraniums climb at their will in great splashes of red and pink, and among them are vines, almost ready to yield their "ancient ruby," as Omar puts it; while from some sun-baked corner the famous melons of Isfahan seem to ask for admiration. And so, with a compliment here and gentle criticism there, the guests pass on to the end of the garden, where one or two of those glorified mulberry trees which in Persian are called *Toot*, and whose sweet and luscious fruit is so welcome in the summer heat, are grouped with a few

courtyard, into which the various apartments open, forms a garden often of no mean proportions. The *hayat*, as this most important part of the Persian establishment is called, merits a somewhat detailed description, and for this reason I give photographs of two examples which, though much alike in their main features, differ widely in many details. The first is in the house occupied at the time of my visit to Isfahan by the manager of the Imperial Bank of Persia. In common with all such enclosed gardens, its centre is occupied by the



THE COMBAT BETWEEN RUSTAM AND SOHRAB: AN EARLY PERSIAN CARVING ON THE VERANDAH IN THE PALACE GARDEN OF THE ZELL-US-SULTAN AT ISFAHAN.

elms and cypresses round some simple fountain or by the slow-running stream.

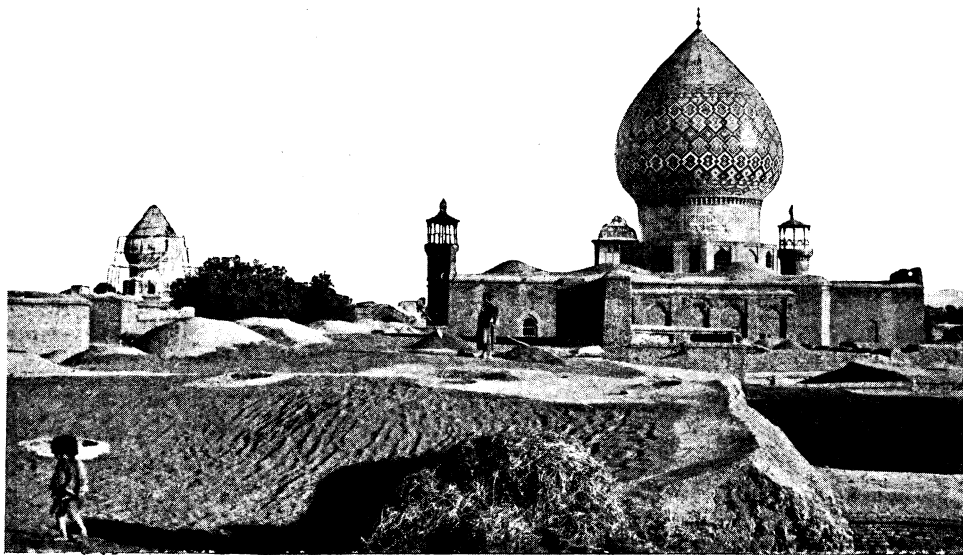
Here the grass is green and the shade cool, and through the branches the distant mountains seem to dance in the evening haze. And here the carpet will be spread and tea prepared from the steaming samovar, while the *kalyan*, or Persian water-pipe, heaped high with the fragrant tobacco of Shiraz, passes slowly round the circle, and the blue smoke curls upwards into the orange sky.

Such is the simplest of Persian gardens, and perhaps not the least charming among them. But there are others, and, for the sake of contrast, let us now enter one of the richer town houses, where the central

*hōse*, or reservoir of water. Though it may vary greatly in size, the *hōse* is almost invariably rectangular in shape and from two to three feet deep, and is enclosed by a rim of stone or marble which allows the water to rise somewhat above the level of the surrounding flower-beds. Jets for one or more fountains break its mirror-like surface, and a path of tiles or marble forms a sort of causeway along its edge. It will be noticed that between the rim of the pool and the raised pathway there is a second and very narrow water channel. This is the *pashooyē*, which means the "place for washing the feet"; but it is improbable that it ever served such a purpose, and its

present use seems to be simply to direct the water through small openings beneath the pathway towards the various flower-beds on the lower level. Of the *hōse* an amusing story is told. In the days of Nasir-u-Din Shah it became the fashion for young men of position to complete their education in Paris, a proceeding highly disapproved of by the older and more conservative Persians, especially as, after a very short residence in the Ville Lumière, many students chose to affect an almost complete ignorance of their own language. "I trust you have not forgotten Persian," asked a high official of his nephew, fresh from Europe, as they walked together in the garden. "What is this?"—pointing to the water

Two other photographs show the garden in the palace of the Zell-us-Sultan, elder brother of the Shah Muzaffar-u-Din, and at that time Governor of Isfahan. Here things are naturally on a much vaster and more luxurious scale. Large trees of various kinds rise from among the flower-beds; the *hōse* boasts of a row of fountains, and its end has been broadened so as to extend across the whole of the great loggia above it. During the heat of summer this deep, high-roofed verandah, known in Persian as *eyvan*, becomes one of the most frequented parts of the house, and in this case its two slender columns, with their arcaded capitals almost like those of Persepolis, have a particular grace. There seems to



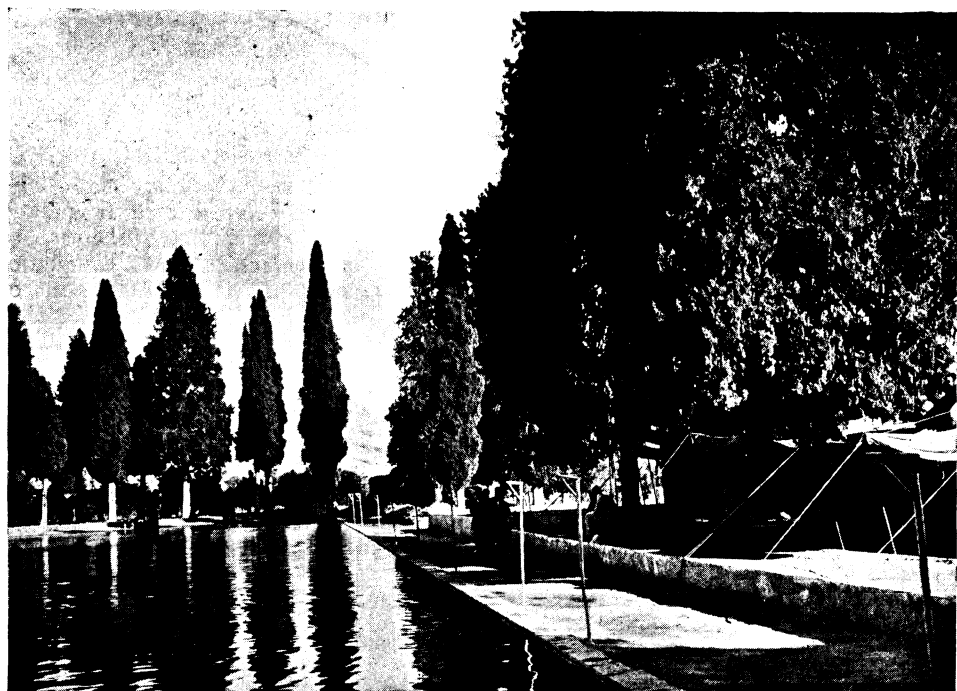
THE DOMES OF SHIRAZ.

beside him. "Bassin," replied the fatuous youth, determined to be French at all costs. "Ah, it is the bastinado you ask for!" cried the irate uncle. "It is well." And the sticks were brought and applied with such vigour that the would-be Parisian soon cried "*Hōse!*" "*Hōse!*" and became a Persian once more.

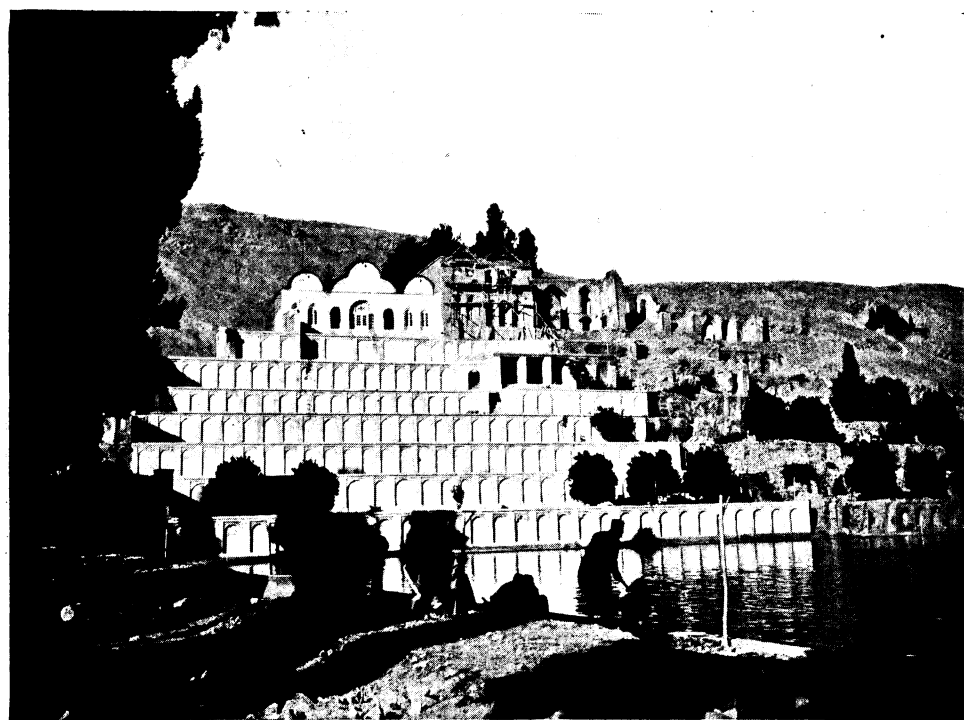
Opposite the end of the *hōse* is the *shahne-shin*, a sort of large bow window projecting beyond the rest of the house and rising to the height of the upper storey. The word means literally "the seat of the Shah," otherwise "the place for honoured guests," and a very pleasant place it is, whether in the warmth of the winter sun or in summer, when the fountain plays and the breeze brings in the scent of the flowers.

be little doubt that the Persian *eyvan* is a direct descendant of the hall of audience of ancient Assyrian palaces, which was generally enclosed by walls on three sides only, and on the fourth by pillars and curtains.

The stone panel between the floor of the *eyvan* and the water is an interesting specimen of early Persian carving. It is supposed to represent the mortal combat between the most popular legendary hero of the country, Rustam, and his unknown son, Sohrab. Lovers of Matthew Arnold will doubtless remember his great poem on the subject, and the tragic moment here depicted with such archaic simplicity. At first I was somewhat doubtful about the matter, but on closer examination the



THE GARDEN OF BAGH-É-TAKHT, SHIRAZ.



THE SUMMER PALACE OF BAGH-É-TAKHT, SHIRAZ.

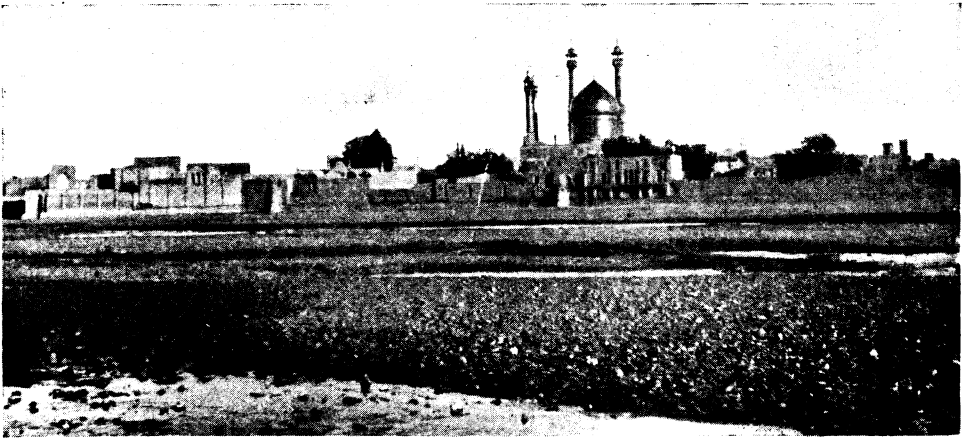
quaint attitude of the horse, which seemed so exactly to fit Arnold's lines

And Ruksh, the horse,  
Who stood at hand, uttered a dreadful cry,  
convinced me.

No article on gardens would be complete without a word about their gardeners. Persians of every class love poetry and are adepts at apt quotation. Even the masons sing verses as they work, and should one upbraid a servant for his slowness, he will immediately reply with some appropriate line from Sadi, the great philosopher poet, about the virtue of patience. The Persian gardener is no exception to this rule. Like his English *confrère*, he is an autocrat; but he is also of a contemplative nature, ready to whisper verse after verse from his favourite poet as he watches the

hyacinth. In Persian it is called *sonbul*, and is one of the seven symbols of the New Year, whose names begin with the Arabic letter "*Sin*" or S. The festival is on March 21, and is of very ancient origin, dating from long before Islam. It is really the feast of the rejuvenation of the year, or of spring, and everyone carries a bouquet of hyacinths, very probably the remnant of some Pagan rite. And so it may be that while the gardener murmurs the lines from Omar's quatrain, his knife, alas, is playing havoc with the garden's lovely curls.

But we must leave Isfahan for a while and take the southern road, past Persepolis, with its broken columns standing sentinel on the edge of the plain, to a break in the hills, where, from the tomb of the poet Hafiz,



THE "MADRASA," OR COLLEGE, OF SHAH SULTAN HUSAYN, AT ISFAHAN.

growth of his favourite flowers. One can hardly imagine an English gardener quoting Shakespeare to his herbaceous border, though a Scotch one might well murmur:

Oh, gin my Love were yon red rose,  
That grows upon the castle wa',

as he fusses about the beds that seem so much more his property than his master's. But the Persian is never at a loss. Even in early spring, when the pale March sun coaxes the slowly opening buds, one flower is certain to bring to his lips the verse of Omar:

That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head,

in which he likens the waving curls of his lady-love's hair to the flower's petals. But there is another reason, besides the purely poetical one, for the importance of the

we look down upon Shiraz with its many-coloured pear-shaped domes, glittering like monstrous enamelled jewels above the white expanse of terraced roofs. Shiraz is the city of Hafiz, who was born there early in the fourteenth century. His real name was Mohamed Shams-u-Din, the *nom de plume* Hafiz simply meaning "one who knows the Koran by heart," an achievement which must have come somewhat late in life, for his writings point clearly to a youth of luxury and pleasure rather than of learning and religion. Many Persians of his time did not hesitate to condemn him, but when one knows Shiraz it is easy to understand his love of spending days in its shady gardens with flowers and wine, seated by running water. So it may be that he often took the road that now is ours, skirting the hills to where a sudden turning through the trees

brings us to the summer palace of Bagh-é-Takht, or "The Garden of the Throne." As an example of landscape gardening this is certainly no mean achievement, and the Persian Le Nôtre, whoever he was, has treated his subject in a manner that even Versailles might envy. Three sides of its great expanse of water are enclosed by a double line of elms and cypresses, and on the fourth terraces, once ablaze with orange trees, rise to the miniature palace that crowns the white pyramid cast against the hillside.

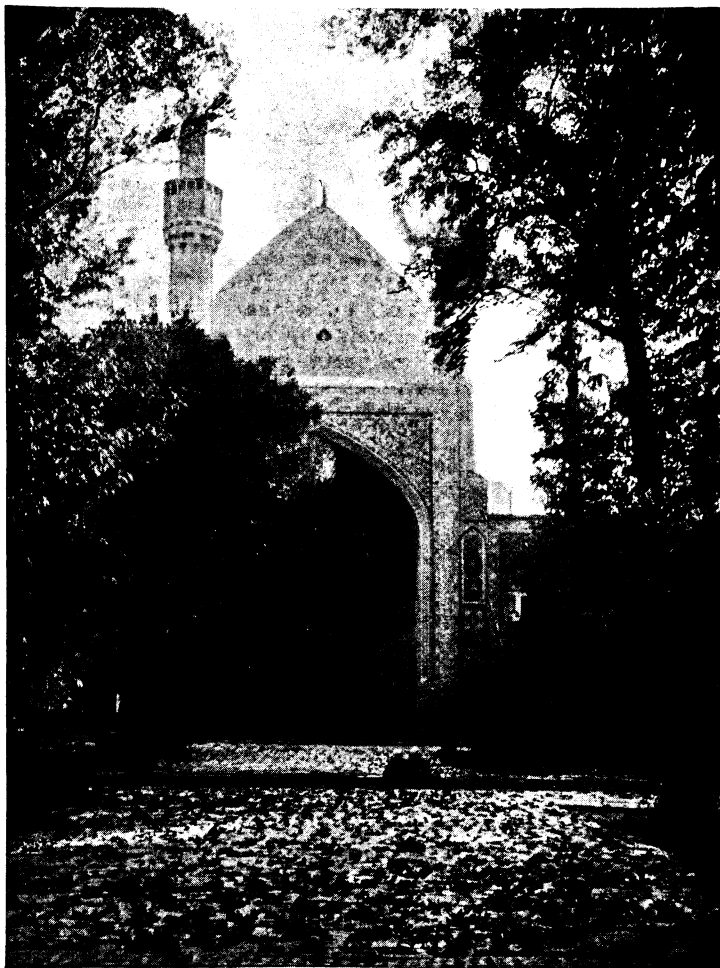
At the time of my visit Prince Farman Farma, the Governor of Shiraz, had undertaken the restoration of the terraces and buildings of Bagh-é-Takht to something of their former splendour, and one of the photographs here reproduced gives an idea of the partly-finished work. Possibly some of my readers may have visited the place in these latter turbulent years, and looked up at the barren mountain standing in eternal menace beyond the water and the terraces; and I think they will agree that with such a view one cannot fail to understand all that a garden means in Persia, and to feel, as Hafiz did, the spell of the valley's soft air.

Indeed, it may well have been by the lake of Bagh-é-Takht that he penned the lines—

If that fair maiden of Shiraz would accept my love,  
I would give for the dark mole that adorns her cheek  
Samarcand and Bokhara,

that were the cause of his celebrated interview with Tamerlane, the conqueror, not only of Persia, but of Mesopotamia, a part of India, and even of Damascus. When he

came to Shiraz he had already heard of the poet's rash offer to his lady-love, and his anger was great, and when Hafiz was brought before him, "With this sword," said Tamerlane, "I have subdued the greater part of the earth in order to increase the glory and wealth of Samarcand and Bokhara, the ordinary places of my residence and the



IN THE GARDEN OF THE "MADRASA," OR COLLEGE, OF SHAH SULTAN HUSAYN, AT ISFAHAN.

seat of my empire; yet thou, an insignificant individual, hast pretended to give away both Samarcand and Bokhara as the price of a little black mole on a pretty face."

Hafiz bowed to the ground and replied: "Alas, O Prince, it is this prodigality which is the cause of the misery in which you see me," a repartee which so delighted

Tamerlane that he treated the poet with kindness and generosity.

But the Bagh-é-Takht has its own particular legend—an old one, perhaps, but in a form so unexpected as to make it seem almost new and worth the telling.

A certain Shah was hunting in the valley of Shiraz, and came by chance to a village near the Bagh-é-Takht. In the village lived a man and his wife with a beautiful daughter, and, having found great loveliness indeed, the monarch repaired with his bride to the castle on the hillside, and as they sat together on the terrace a wonderful spotted deer suddenly appeared among the trees below and began scratching its ear with its hind foot. Springing to his feet, the Shah seized his bow. "Now watch well what I can do!" he cried, as the arrow sped on its way and transfixed both foot and ear. "Is not thy lord a wonder, and thy master a marvel?" But she only smiled up at him and said: "Neither a marvel nor a wonder, for this is only a matter of practice!" Whereupon the Shah's anger was great, and, leaving the lady alone in the castle, he passed on his journey.

A year later the Shah again hunted near by. Again the people came to pay homage, and the chief humbly asked if his Majesty had heard of the wonder of their village. "No," said the Shah. "What is it?" "Nothing less," replied the village chief, "than a woman who carries a cow on her back every day from the valley up to the castle. If your Majesty will come and see." And soon, sure enough, a veiled figure approached and climbed gracefully and easily up the steep path, carrying on its back an enormous cow.

"O woman," cried the Shah, "O marvel of marvels! O wonder of wonders! How can you perform such a difficult feat?" Through the veil a pair of dark eyes laughed at him, and a voice he seemed to have heard before said: "Ah, my lord, have you indeed forgotten the spotted deer? The

cow was once a tiny calf, so, after all, this, too, is only a matter of practice." And together they mounted once more the path to the castle.

So much for legends, but before leaving these cool waters and this welcome shade I would give yet another quotation, this time from the second great poet of the province of Fars, Mosleh-ud-Din, known to all the world as Sadi. He, better than anyone, can tell us of the flowers that once covered the terraces of Bagh-é-Takht and ran riot beneath the trees that border its lake, and the translation by Professor Browne of Cambridge is charming—

O cypress tree, with silver limbs, this colour and scent  
of thine  
Have shamed the scent of the myrtle plant, and the  
bloom of the eglantine.  
Judge with thine eyes, and set thy foot in the garden  
fair and free,  
And tread jasmine under thy foot, and the flowers of  
the Judas tree.

And now, from Shiraz with its flowers and wine, its princes and its poets, let us hasten back to Isfahan, where, in the *madrasa*, or college, of Shah Sultan Husayn, yet another garden awaits us. Such religious colleges also exist at Fez, the capital of Morocco, with deep cloistered courtyards, devoid of any green thing save perhaps some ancient vine that has survived by a miracle the centuries of neglect. But Persia has not the austerity of the West, and the great court of Sultan Husayn is indeed a garden. Here the combination of shade and flowers enhances the beauty of the building, and makes a perfect setting to the dome of the mosque with its exquisite tiles of blue and yellow and green; and here, when their devotions and studies are over, the students walk beneath the trees, or drink tea and smoke the *kalyan* by the running stream.

It is a tranquil spot, in which one cannot but feel the spell of that Asia of which it was written: "Here vulgarity ceases, and a world begins where dignity has its birth and intellectual elegance its source."

## THE YEW.

**WHERE** all's May-new  
One venerable thing,

That old black hedgerow yew,

Mutely remembers many a fledged Spring.

The new-come nightingale prepares to sing;

I think his ancient heart thrills to that music, too,

MICHAEL WILSON.





"The next instant there was a writhing mass upon the ground."

# KING O' THE PLAIN

By ARTHUR MILLS

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT HOLIDAY

**D**ONATO, the old gaucho horse-tamer, and I were watching the parting of some cattle. A young steer was giving particular trouble. Maybe he knew that no good could come to him once he permitted himself to be separated from his comrades. Certainly he fought gamely, darting to one side or the other, turning and twisting in and out of the herd, stopping dead in his tracks just as he seemed fairly set upon his way.

Round the steer and by the side of him two horsemen rode, sweat pouring from their faces, foam-flecks flying from their horses' mouths, working desperately to get the beast between them, so that, riding with knee pressed to flank, they might take him out at full gallop from the herd.

A twinkle of contempt lit Donato's keen old eyes. Not that the task of the peons was easy on their half-broken horses. There are men on the form list at Hurlingham, riding their own perfectly schooled three-

hundred-guinea polo ponies, who would have made a sorrier mess of it. But Donato judged the handling of cattle in the light of his own hard experience, dating from the days when cattle were really wild, not the offspring of placid imported cows, when the gaucho cattlemen rode with uncut hair flowing in the wind, after the fashion of their Indian fathers.

"Huh! At last!" he grunted, as he saw the peons emerge from the herd with the steer between them.

On they came, reins held high, *rebenques* (rawhide riding whips) raised. The steer, trapped and maddened, strove desperately to turn back again to his comrades. But this, so long as the two horsemen kept exactly level and abreast his shoulders, was not possible. The peons worked in perfect unison, scarcely an inch between their horses' heads—as well for the life of each they did.

Then, in the flash of a second, something



went amiss. The peon on the side nearest to us seemed to get too much in front; the steer, keeping pace with the horse, drew in front of the man on the other side, and suddenly, seeing his opening, whipped to the right. Next instant there was a writhing mass upon the ground.

Donato watched the steer galloping away, pursued by the other peon, then looked towards man and horse lying motionless. "He does not know even how to fall," he grunted.

This I thought hard, as the poor fellow had fallen as heavily as a man well could, and quite possibly was dead. "How else could he have fallen?" I inquired.

"But upon his feet, señor, though, for that matter, with the cattle of to-day, it makes little difference. In the old days, when they were less tame, it was not good for a man to fall upon his face among cattle."

In the meanwhile one or two other peons were endeavouring to head back the escaped steer, but no one took the least notice of the man upon the ground. I suggested to Donato we should go over to him.

We came to the peon. Donato turned him over. I gave an exclamation. Out of the face of the man, twisted with pain, Victor Mendip's light blue eyes stared up at me.

Mendip was a young Englishman who had come out to learn the cattle business. He was serving his apprenticeship in the old rough-and-ready fashion—living and working with peons, as the native cattlemen are called. Though he never complained to me, I knew the boy had a pretty hard time. He was a quiet, gentle-looking youngster, fragily built, with fair hair, soft and fine as a woman's, and light blue eyes. How he survived at all among those tough half-Indian, half-Spanish cattlemen, was a wonder. I often guessed he had a good deal to put up with.

We put our hands under his shoulders and got him to his feet. He could not stand alone, and signed to Donato to lead his horse towards him. Placing his hands on the sheepskin saddle, he dragged himself on to the animal's back.

Together the three of us rode back to the *pulperia*. Vincente, the Italian store-keeper, came out and took our horses. Mendip, leaning heavily upon my shoulder, entered the bar. Donato called for *cana*. Three glasses were filled. Mendip took his hand from my shoulder and, as he leant

to lift his drink, pitched forward on to the floor.

From the back of the store a girl hurried forward, dark-eyed, with a lovely clear olive skin, seventeen or eighteen years of age. As she bent over Mendip, Donato told her in a few words what had happened.

"Who rode on the other side of the steer?" asked the girl.

"Miguel."

Her eyes lit indignantly. "You were watching? It was Miguel's fault?" she challenged.

Donato's bright black eyes twinkled. "That is a question you must ask Miguel's horse."

As the girl and her father carried Mendip to an inner room, Donato turned to me. "It was done on purpose, of course," he said.

"On purpose?"

"Why does a man spur his horse when he is already in front of another? Maybe some little quarrel they have had." Donato looked through the door significantly to where Leonita bent over the injured man. "There was a *baille* last night. I think she danced more often with the English gringo than with Miguel."

I nodded, thinking that if my young English friend was going to involve himself in the fierce love affairs of the "camp" so early in his career, he was making a dangerous start.

After they had patched Mendip up, we all went and sat on a bench outside the store. The *maté* bowl had just been brought, when a dark, handsome fellow, with coal-black hair and bright, dark eyes, swaggered across the patio, rolling a little in his cumbersome great spurs, his whip swinging from his wrist, a revolver shining aggressively in his belt.

He greeted us all and settled himself on a bench by Leonita. Seeing the newcomer was Miguel, I expected him to make some courteous reference to Mendip about the mishap. But the Spaniard did not even trouble to inquire how his comrade was. He rolled a cigarette, lit it, and drew a draught of smoke into his lungs.

"My father has sent me to inquire the price of mules," he remarked to the company.

Vincente, taking the question seriously, at once offered information. Mendip watched Miguel's face. "Why does your father want mules?" he asked.

"Because their backs are narrower, and a man may get a better grip of the saddle."

"Your father has, then, some men to whom the back of a horse comes strange?"

"He heard that one fell off to-day," answered Miguel blandly.

Vincente sniggered. Leonita looked at her father furiously.

"*Fell off!*" repeated Mendip, laying stress on the first word.

"So I am informed, though the horse may have fallen, too—as is often the way when too great weight is put upon a horse's ears."

Watching young Mendip's eyes, I saw a hard light come into them. "Do they still have the sport of riding *potros* (unbroken horses) on holidays in these parts?" he asked.

"I believe the *gringos* (tenderfeet) sometimes do," answered Miguel, "when they are not too sore from falling off during the week's work."

Miguel looked across at Leonita. Evidently the purpose of his visit was to try and make the young Englishman look ridiculous in front of her, for in the "camp" the women, equally with the men, despise a bad horseman.

The Englishman's blue eyes rested lazily on Miguel. "I will bet you a new saddle I can stay on a horse longer than you."

Now, in the "camp," where all men have ridden since they were four years old, a man does not lightly throw out a challenge to the horsemanship of others. There is something superfluous in such talk.

Little flashes like the sparks from a plug touching on a car cylinder came from Miguel's eyes. Mendip's remark was said in a manner that made it an insult. Had Miguel not noticed the Englishman's hand resting seemingly casually on his hip, he would have drawn his revolver. As it was, in that land where no one ever threatens, he knew better than to make a gesture which would be at best belated and might cost his life.

"How do you suggest we arrange this interesting little trial of skill?" Miguel inquired.

Old Donato intervened. "The custom used to be for each man to point out the horse he wished the other to ride."

"That seems very fair," said Mendip. "Do you agree?"

Miguel nodded. Under his dark skin his face looked curiously white. "I do not quite understand why the señor considers his chances equal to mine?"

Mendip's eyes travelled slowly from

Miguel's swarthy neck down to his boots. "If at any time during the trial Don Miguel cares to make some other suggestion, I shall be happy to consider it."

News of the match spread quickly in the neighbourhood, so that by noon on Sunday there must have been fully a hundred peons gathered at the *pulperia*. At two o'clock we all mounted our horses and set out.

We came to the great paddock where the *potros* were. The peons, lining out like men beating pheasants through a wood, drove the horses in front of them. The young horses galloped wildly, shoulder to shoulder; an old bell mare (*madrina*, as they call such in those parts) trotted placidly behind; while one great black horse kept aloof, galloping wide to the left of the *potros*, haughty, fierce, unconcerned.

Donato pointed to the big black horse. "He is the king of the drove," he said.

"Will they try to catch and ride him, too?" I asked, suspecting the question was silly, but curious to hear the old man's answer.

Donato shook his head. "No, señor, you cannot tame a horse after he has run wild for a few years upon the plains; he becomes too proud." (I render the old man's meaning as best I can, though the word he used for "proud" has a stronger sense, easily understood by anyone who has seen the unquenchable fire in a wild thoroughbred's eyes.)

A few minutes' work sufficed to collect the horses into a corner of the paddock, where the peons, forming a half-circle of sentinels around them, kept them penned. Leonita was beside me. I could see how anxious she felt. I felt anxious, too, for it was a wild act of the young Englishman to pit himself against a man like Miguel, whose skill in riding any sort of animal was admitted throughout the district.

"Miguel has the first choice," said Donato, coming back from watching the toss of the coin. "Huh! They all have the air of sheep," he added, regarding the drove of *potros*. "See how fat they are, from eating too much grass; it is always so after heavy rain."

I said nothing; never in my wildest moments would I have contradicted any opinion Donato expressed on horses, though the *potros* looked like anything but sheep to me.

"In the old days, before Salto was a town," continued Donato, "I have seen a man ride up to a *boliche* (drinking booth),

tie a knot in the tail of his horse, touch him with his spur, and sit there while he bucked for forty minutes; then he would dismount and wash the blood from his mouth with the bottle of *cana* he had won by remaining in the saddle."

"Why did he tie the knot in the horse's tail?"

"To keep it from dragging in the mud. Look! Miguel has chosen."

Following Donato's glance, I saw Miguel pointing out a young chestnut colt to the Englishman.

Mendip nodded and, slipping his hand to the back of the saddle, unfastened his lasso. The peons tightened the cordon round the horses. Mendip, swinging the lasso slowly above his head, went forward. He rode right into the middle of the group of horses, indifferent to the chance of kicks, and caught the colt's neck with the first throw of the lasso.

Then the fight began. Not for nothing was a young, high-couraged horse, that in his short wild life on the great plain had never known a restraining hand, going to submit at the asking to the mastery of man. First the colt plunged in and out among his fellows, rearing, kicking, till the thud of hoof on flesh horrified my ears. Finally he broke loose and dashed out over the plain, Mendip riding like the wind just behind him, skilfully keeping the lasso taut, but not taut to strangling point. Gradually the pressure of the noose round the slender throat prevailed; the colt's breath came in rasping gasps, and after a while he stood still. A second peon, galloping out, flung another lasso round his legs; a quick twist and the colt lay on the ground. To fasten the *bocado* (rawhide bit) round his jaw was the work of a second; then the colt was allowed to rise, his forelegs and neck still secured by lassoes. Quick as lightning a saddle was clapped on his back, one deft tug at the surcingle, and Mendip leaped into the saddle.

For a moment the colt, utterly dumbfounded by this strange live thing on his back, stood still. A *rebenque* rose and fell upon his flank. Shrill cries of "Ee! Ah! Ee! Ah!" came from the throats of a score of peons. The colt gave a bound in the air, all four legs stiff, head between his knees. Mendip drove his spurs cunningly into the girths so that he secured a purchase without injury to the satin flanks. In the fight that followed, man and the plunging, rearing, bucking horse seemed one.

"Ee! Ah! Ee! Ah!" the peons called, as the Englishman tugged and strained to get the colt's head up from between his knees.

Miguel watched calmly. Not for nothing had he picked that chestnut colt. If the Englishman could stay on, he would do well. The more temper an animal had, the harder he was to master, and if he (Miguel) was any judge of such matters, he had seen temper for ten gleaming from the whites of that chestnut's eyes.

But the boy stayed on, though his teeth rattled, and the world grew black, though his knees were raw and his hands turned to jelly by the rawhide reins. And in the end he won, for the colt, after one last mad gallop round the paddock, came suddenly of his own accord to a standstill, eyes startled, sweating, shivering in every limb—in the words of Donato, "tamed."

Mendip jumped to the ground, patted the colt, and rolled across, as well as his great spurs allowed him, to where we stood. A little smile lurked in the corners of his eyes, and somehow I began to fancy he might get the better of Miguel, after all.

Miguel, dark, sinister, scowling, waited his approach. He had picked the worst horse of the lot, and the young Englishman had ridden him as if he had been a mule.

"It is your choice, señor," he said.

"My choice." Mendip looked thoughtfully at the horses, stroking his chin with the point of his whip. "Really, señor, if they are all as quiet as that one, I hardly care to trouble you."

"It was agreed we should each ride in turn," answered Miguel. "Perhaps, when we have ridden a dozen or more apiece, we shall discover one more lively, or, at least, who will seem more lively, as our limbs begin to ache."

"Señor, I should not wish you to suffer from fatigue, but as you insist, and it is your turn, as you say, will you?"—Mendip paused, looked carefully at the horses—"will you be so good as to ride the *madrina* there."

We all of us stared at Mendip in amazement, Leonita, her father, Donato, Miguel and myself. I for one could hardly believe my ears. Yet Mendip's whip pointed unerringly at the old bell mare.

Suddenly Donato gave a great guffaw. "The *madrina*! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Once again, if Mendip's hand had not been lying lightly on his hip, this story might have ended. For on the cattle plains of Argentina you cannot insult a

*domador* (horse-tamer) more than by asking him to ride a mare. I do not suppose in all his seventy odd years old Donato had ever done so. And such a mare, too—the old *madrina*, with the bell round her neck, she was just kept to be a sort of godmother for the young colts.

Miguel managed a sort of twisted smile. "The señor is witty at my expense. Which horse does he really wish that I should ride?"

"But the *madrina*, I have said," answered Mendip.

Now Miguel took his whip and flung it on the ground; his face flamed with rage.

"The joke is no longer funny; please choose the horse."

"I have chosen. If you do not like my choice, please pay the bet. It was agreed between us that each should ride in turn the horse chosen by the other."

It was clear now that Mendip was in earnest, though his motive remained obscure. I imagine he intended to revenge himself for Miguel's taunts about his horsemanship, in which case he certainly succeeded. Miguel had either to admit himself fooled and pay up, or under the eyes of a hundred peons, and with Leonita's smile goading him to fury, climb on to the back of the old brood mare. For several minutes he hesitated, and then a gleam came in his eye, as dangerous as the smile that had lit Mendip's blue eyes a little while before.

He walked over to the *madrina*, adjusted his saddle, and climbed on to her back. Giving the mare a rap with his whip, he cantered round the paddock and came to a standstill in front of us.

He jumped to the ground. At first he was hardly able to speak for rage. Mendip addressed him blandly.

"Now, señor, the choice is with you."

Miguel turned his dark eyes on the Englishman. "I have finished with this fooling."

"Finished! You are satisfied, then, that I am the better horseman."

"No, señor; but I do not choose to try further tests with you."

"They are not severe enough, perhaps. Señorita"—Mendip looked at Leonita—"will you lend me that handkerchief that is round your pretty neck?"

Leonita was wearing one of the coloured silk handkerchiefs which are specially prized by the South American girls on the "camp." For a peon to give a girl one of

these handkerchiefs, or to ask for the one she is wearing, implies a high degree of intimacy.

Miguel watched furiously as Leonita unfastened the scarf and handed it to the Englishman. Mendip ran the handkerchief through his hands. "Señor, as you say, what we have done so far is easy. Any man can ride a horse that has first been secured by the lasso and thrown to the ground. Shall we try some other experiment? This handkerchief now is not much with which to hold an untamed horse. Do you care to make another wager? Bet me, say, one of your horses to one of mine that I will not stay for two minutes on the back of a *potro*, using only this?" He held up the handkerchief.

Miguel looked contemptuously at the piece of silk. "Out here we do not ride horses with women's frills."

"No, señor, that is evident. When your turn comes, you shall have saddle, lasso, bocado, men to help you, what you wish. I only say that without the aid of these things, which to you seem imperative, I can do the same—unless, that is, Don Miguel is afraid to try conclusions."

"Afraid! And upon what horse do you propose to try this foolery?" sneered Miguel.

"Any horse you may name, señor."

"Any horse I may name?"

I did not like the look in Miguel's eyes as he spoke, though certainly the Englishman was to blame, for he had goaded the Spaniard past the endurance of an average man.

Miguel looked towards the horses gathered in the corner. I was certain that some devilish suggestion was coming.

"The horse I will ask the señor to ride," he said, "is that one over there." He pointed his whip at the great black horse standing aloof from the others upon a knoll.

Leonita gave a cry; Vincente opened his mouth; Donato intervened.

"It is not usual, señor, to ask a man to ride a wild horse who is the leader of a drove; the animal is savage."

"Nor is it usual to ask a man to ride an old bell mare," replied Miguel.

"The one was a jest, señor; the man who attempts to get on the back of that horse may lose his life."

Miguel shrugged his shoulders. "The señor can, if he pleases, pay his stake."

Mendip came forward.

I put my hand on his arm. "For Heaven's



"We saw the handkerchief was tied tight round the horse's eyes."

sake, man, don't be a fool! The horse will kill you for a certainty."

But a fighting light was shining in his eyes. The matter had gone too far for any words of mine to take effect. He walked to within ten paces of the great black horse and looked at him carefully.

"He seems sound," he said, "though I do not feel tempted to try and lift his legs. If Don Miguel will lay the horse against one of mine that I do not stay on his back ten minutes, I shall be content."

"That horse is worth five thousand dollars," said Miguel.

"I will gladly lay Don Miguel five thousand dollars to a peso he dare not get on his back at all," said Mendip.

Miguel flushed again. "And I will lay the señor the stake he desires," he sneered.

Leonita came to Mendip, her arms out-

stretched. "Don't. He wants to kill you, that is all."

"Others have wanted to, señorita," Mendip answered.

Plainly the matter had now passed out of our hands.

Mendip looked thoughtfully at the great black horse. I think he knew he had taken on the most awkward proposition in his career.

For my part I had a strong desire to go back to the *pulperia*. The whole enterprise was distasteful to me. What chance had this Englishman, even with the aid of the peons, lasso, bocado and all the paraphernalia of horse-taming in Argentina? Without these things, with only a silk handkerchief! No, it was murder, as Miguel well knew.

"Che"—Mendip turned to me, using



"The horse, blindfolded, stood motionless. The Englishman calmly took out his watch."

that little peculiar word which in Argentina conveys everything in friendship—"will you ride to the *pulperia* and fetch me a bag of sugar?"

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" guffawed Donato.

Mendip smiled pleasantly; he turned to Leonita. "Señorita, I will try not to hurt this pretty handkerchief of yours."

The scene that followed reminded me of David and Goliath. I shall never forget the expression on the faces of those peons as the Englishman approached the horse with only a silk handkerchief.

The peons were clustered on a knoll, and they stared and stared. Where was his lasso? How else could he catch a wild

horse? Why had he taken off his spurs? He had no *rebenque*. They were mystified.

But Donato, who knew all things, was frankly scornful. "Huh!" he grunted. "Your English way of taming horses is no good for these."

I said nothing, for I never contradicted the old man.

The man and the horse regarded one another impassively. Presently Mendip took a step forward, then another, till he was within a few feet of the beautiful black legs. The horse's ears lay flat now against his graceful head; his satin lips were curled back on his white teeth. Then at the next step Mendip took he struck forward viciously with his near foreleg. Mendip had judged his distance and dodged. He now poured some of the sugar from the bag into his palm and came forward once more, hand outstretched. Some three feet from the horse he halted. Again the pair looked at one another. Then the horse took a step forward. His mouth was open, and that he would bite the man's hand off at the wrist appeared a certainty.

Mendip never moved a muscle; his outstretched hand was as steady as if it lay upon a rest. The horse made a quick snatch, and it seemed as though his jaws paused in the very act of engulfing Mendip's hand. Instead, he sniffed the sugar, licked a morsel suspiciously, and finally ate the lot. When he had finished, Mendip gingerly lifted his other hand which held the handkerchief. The black whipped round and, heels in the air, departed.

Once more the whole business began again. But there is no need to repeat the details. Suffice it that at the end of two hours Mendip had got the horse to stand while he gently rubbed his nose and patted his belly.

Now, as I imagined, I saw what the silk handkerchief was for. Using it at first as a caress, Mendip rubbed harder and harder, particularly the back and withers. At any moment a kick from those wicked heels

might have ended his activities, or a snatch of that jaw torn a limb from his body. But beyond nipping at him in play, as horses will at one another, the black horse showed no vice.

The boy stood there *grooming the horse* as calmly as if he was standing in a stable. And the horse seemed to like it.

Still, there was a vast gulf between this stage and getting on his back.

I had seen a man ride a horse on a silk handkerchief before, slipping the handkerchief into his mouth, and by the unexpected gentleness of the control surprising the horse into docility. But that was with a horse that was already tame, not an animal such as this. I doubted if Mendip would ever get on his back at all. Even if he did, the black would throw him instantly, and with the man at the horse's mercy on the ground, the rest would not be good to watch.

Now it seemed Mendip was working towards a special point. He rubbed the horse's ears, his throat, the white star between the eyes. Now and again he laid the handkerchief over the horse's head and left it there.

Then suddenly we saw the handkerchief was tied tight round the horse's eyes. And next second Mendip had jumped upon his back. The horse, blindfolded, stood motionless. The Englishman calmly took out his watch. At the end of the two minutes he jumped to the ground, unfastened the handkerchief and, with a graceful bow, returned it to Leonita.

Vincente, the peons, Miguel, seemed utterly dumbfounded.

Even the black horse stayed still an instant before he gave a great bound and galloped off over the plain. I was as speechless as the rest. Then a great laugh rang out.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" guffawed Donato, holding his sides.

Seeing me stare at him, he inquired: "Do they not do that in your English stables when there is a fire?"



# A LINE ENGAGEMENT

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

THE heart belonging to the voice was badly fractured. So the voice conveyed to Kit, who, possessed of red hair and a stern contempt of sentiment, had been under the impression that she was talking to Roddy Byrne about golf. She had indeed rung him up to tell him that the match they had arranged must be postponed, but had said no more than "I'm awfully sorry, Roddy," when he had interrupted her with the aforesaid information, for which, indeed, she was so utterly unprepared that for a moment she doubted that it *was* Roddy speaking, after all.

But when you have known a man for two whole years, and have ridden and danced and played golf and gone sailing with him nearly every day for the past fortnight, his voice should at least be rather easy to identify, even over a telephone. Kit's uncertainty lasted only a moment. It *was* Roddy, right enough, but what in the world was he talking about?

Supposing that he had a heart—at least, the sort of heart likely to share the fate of a dropped tea-cup—what had it to do with *her*? As a pal with whom to ride and sail, a good opponent at golf and partner for dancing, Roddy Byrne's demeanour had been entirely satisfactory. In other words, he never talked piffle. Men who talked piffle had had an extremely thin time with Kit ever since her red pigtail had wound itself about a very charming and shapely head. Some had attempted it, but not Roddy Byrne. Roddy Byrne had apparently grasped the fact from the first that—well, that piffle *was* piffle.

Whereupon his present statement was somewhat confusing. Before Kit had had time to find a possible explanation, the voice had reiterated its plaint. It had also addressed her as "Lucy."

"Oh!" said Kit. There was a whole continent of expression in that "Oh!"

Obviously Roddy Byrne thought he was talking to Lucy Adair; equally obvious was the fact that it was Lucy Adair who was responsible for his fractured heart.

Lucy Adair! Kit, clutching the receiver, became actually pink with the complexity of emotions aroused by the discovery. Lucy Adair was the Rector's daughter, and conveyed the impression, consciously or unconsciously, of reflecting the personality of the Lucy of the classic poem.

Kit, who, in common with many fellow-victims, had been enforced in her school days to read of that Lucy who dwelt among untrodden ways, a maid whom there was none to praise, and very few to love, had always honestly endeavoured not to allow her involuntary dislike of this mythical damsel to colour her feelings towards Lucy Adair. But somehow Lucy Adair's plaintive voice and perennial air of pathetic droop had a way of proving unaccountably irritating.

Kit herself didn't dwell among untrodden ways at all. She accompanied her Aunt Theodora from hotel to hydro and hydro to hotel, with occasional short sea voyages and visits, like the present one, to country houses, where she brought a radiant vitality to the dullest house-party, and checked all attempts to talk piffle.

Visits to the Beckwiths were always satisfactory, because in winter Roddy Byrne, who was a great friend of the Beckwith boys, made such a sporting pilot in the hunting field, and in summer he could be relied on for sailing or golf or tennis, besides lending a decided attraction to country house and village cricket matches. He was, in fact, the one sure hope of his eleven at a match to be played that same afternoon—a



match over which Kit had whole-heartedly shared the Beckwith boys' enthusiasm.

And now Lucy Adair had broken his heart.

Kit felt that she could have shaken Lucy Adair with the greatest of pleasure. She did not seek to analyse the cause of her resentment beyond the indignant conviction that Lucy had acted in a thoroughly unsporting manner. Inexperienced as she was in the question of fractured hearts, Kit felt it more than likely that Roddy Byrne's bowling would be affected. Indeed, by the tone of his voice—a tone which she had never heard in it before—one might judge that his whole existence had received an annihilating blow.

So far he hadn't given her a chance of replying, and she couldn't help reflecting somewhat bitterly that she'd never heard him make so long a speech. Evidently Lucy Adair was responsible for a lot, but she should *not*, Kit determined fiercely, be responsible for the public humiliation and failure of a thoroughly sporting cricketer. Roddy Byrne should surpass, not fail, the expectations of his supporters—he must!

And then she got her cue.

Roddy was appealing against the finality of his sentence with an eloquence that struck Kit afresh. With a little gasp that was only half a laugh, she attuned her own clear voice as well as she could to Lucy's plaintive tones.

"Oh, Roddy!" Then, with a gallant effort in the interests of Roddy's salvation as cricketer: "Roddy, darling, I—I've changed my mind."

The effect of this information on Roddy, darling, could only be guessed at by the ensuing pause at the other end of the line. Kit took a deep breath and went on.

"It—it was all a mistake. I didn't realise it until now. But oh, Roddy, darling"—Kit, having taken the plunge, so to speak, was determined to do things thoroughly—"when I see you, after the match this afternoon, *everything* 'll be all right, won't it?"

"Lucy, but I can't wait until then. Can't I see you before?"

"I wish you could, but I—I'm afraid it's impossible, Roddy, darling. You see, it's half-past twelve now, and there's the match at two, and—and I have a sewing guild meeting"—this was sheer inspiration—"and I shan't be able to get to the ground until nearly four. It's"—she remembered just in time that Lucy never used slang—"it's terribly disappointing, but at least you understand, and—and I know you'll play

more wonderfully than ever, for—for my sake."

She had hesitated over that last sentence because she felt that Lucy would probably have left the question of cricket alone, but, remembering that it was in the cause of cricket that she had embarked in the whole affair, she decided the reminder would not come amiss. Afterwards, she told herself piously, Roddy would thank her for that—for helping to uphold his cricket reputation. It was not until she had said "Good-bye, Roddy, darling!" and hung up the receiver with a long breath of relief, that it occurred to her that Roddy would have no occasion to thank her, because he would never know that it was she, and not Lucy Adair, to whom he had been speaking. The reflection gave her a queer little shock, and she began to realise the depth of the plot in which she had involved herself, and the immediate necessity of attacking its problems.

First there was Lucy, who, instead of being shaken as she deserved, must be convinced of her ridiculous error in refusing to marry Roddy Byrne. This, moreover, must be accomplished before she and Roddy had a chance of meeting one another. Kit hoped fervently that there *was* a sewing guild meeting or some kindred frivolity to prevent Lucy's attendance at the cricket match, and, for the first time, blessed her conscientious devotion to duty. She herself would be forced to go down to the ground, as she had promised, with the Beckwith boys. Her only chance was to get away as soon as possible, find Lucy, and explain the situation. Kit had every intention of doing that with some force. She was also prepared, in the interests of Roddy's bowling and batting, to provide any further heartening influence that might be needed.

To this end, perhaps, she selected a black-and-white striped muslin frock and a wide straw hat with a ribbon of that precise shade of green that is perfection with red hair. She also provided herself, on meeting the white-flannelled person of Roddy Byrne on the cricket pavilion verandah, with a brilliant smile.

"I've been looking," he said, as he came across to her, "for——"

She smiled encouragingly, waiting for the "Lucy Adair."

"—you," he finished gravely. "About that match of ours to-morrow, I think, if I give you——"

"Oh!" said Kit. She realised then that the very message for which she had rung

him up that morning had been quite forgotten. Surreptitiously she scanned his square, good-humoured face from beneath her lashes. It wore an expression of cheerful

waywardness had so nearly ruined the reputation of a good sportsman. With an effort she retained the brilliant smile, wondering a little at Roddy Byrne's whole-



"She glanced away from him down the gold and green of the sun-and-shade

confidence that, of course, was due to her. There was a glow of conscious pride in the thought, but behind the pride an ever more fervent desire to shake Lucy Adair, whose

hearted interest in his golf match with her, and finally explaining it to herself with the decision that it was simply the outcome of his own satisfaction. Since his heart was no

longer broken, he felt on good terms with all the world, which was a really brilliant conclusion, considering Kit's extremely limited experience with affairs of the heart and their attendant "piffle."

At least, she should, perhaps, have been relieved to note that no heartening efforts on her part were needed. Roddy Byrne, his affections no longer blighted, was prepared to surpass himself in vigour and dexterity.

But somehow she didn't want to talk to him just then. She moved away, still wearing the brilliant smile and keeping an ever-vigilant watch for the appearance of Lucy. And Roddy Byrne went in to bat.

He was still in when, an hour later, Kit found her opportunity of slipping away unnoticed from the ground. Once out of sight she ran down the lane to the Rectory, to learn, with mingled feelings of relief and disgust, that Lucy Adair was at home.

The disgust was occasioned by the fact that anyone could choose to remain at home when Roddy Byrne was playing stupendous cricket only a mile and a quarter away; the relief by the fact that at all events here was the opportunity for making Lucy realise what a little fool she was.

At which point Lucy came into the Rectory drawing-room with a plaintive welcoming smile. "I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting. I never thought of seeing *you* to-day, though. Isn't there a cricket match on?"

"There is," said Kit, and no two words could have conveyed a weightier meaning. "There is. And Roddy Byrne is batting like—like blazes!"

Lucy looked faintly shocked. "Oh, Kit! But he always *is* good at 'cricket, isn't he?"

"Good?" echoed Kit. "*Good?*" Her small face was pink with indignation. "Of course he's good! But it's little thanks to you he's good to-day, anyway. If he'd been bowled first ball, it wouldn't have been surprising after your treatment of him! If he'd never played cricket again, it would have been all your fault! Anything," Kit said fiercely, "*anything* might have happened because of you. And he's a sportsman—one of the best. It isn't *fair*! If I hadn't by the merest chance been able to put things right, or, at least, right until you'll do so——" She paused for breath, and Lucy stared at her with wide blue eyes.

"Me?" she said blankly, startled out of grammar and plaintiveness simultaneously.

Kit stamped her foot. "Yes, you! You've

just got to marry Roddy Byrne, and—and go and tell him so as soon as possible! Go *now*! I'll stay here and add up the clothing club or whatever it is you're doing. Just get a hat and go. You never ought to have refused him, if you've any—any sense at all! But at least you've got the chance of putting things right, though you don't deserve it."

"Oh!" said Lucy weakly. She gazed at Kit's stormy countenance with a sort of fascination. "Oh, I—I'm afraid there's some mistake!"

"Mistake?" Kit's voice rang with scorn and exasperation. "I should think it was a mistake! I'm glad you realise it. You won't have to tell him that, because I've already done it for you; but I hope—I hope you'll make up for—for what you *have* done."

She broke off abruptly, and Lucy said, with a really praiseworthy recovery of her plaintively patient air: "Kit, dear, there *is* a mistake, truly. I don't understand in the least what it's all about."

Kit said very quietly, and telling herself that she would never have believed Lucy could be like this: "It's about Roddy Byrne."

"Yes, but *what* about him? I mean, why do you come to me?"

"Why—do—I—come—to—you?"

"Kit, dear——"

Kit gave a queer little laugh. "I should have thought I'd made it plain enough. You refused Roddy Byrne."

"But I haven't."

"He thought so, anyway."

"But he couldn't. He's never asked me, directly or indirectly—I'm sure he's never thought of it. He knows I'm going to marry Kenneth Denham as soon as Sir Giles gets him the living at Hawfield. I thought you knew, too. I can't think what can have put this into your head."

She looked at Kit with anxious solicitude, and Kit said in a very small still voice: "But there isn't another Lucy who he could have thought would ring him up, is there? I mean—besides, he seemed to—to recognise the voice—and—— Oh, I've got to find out! I don't know *any* other Lucys, do you?"

"There's old Lucy Barnes and the Randall baby. That's all, I think."

Kit laughed hysterically. "Lucy Barnes is eighty-four, and the Randall baby two months. How could it be either of them?"

"Kit, dear, I'm sure you don't feel well. Let me get you a cup of tea."

But Kit was already half-way to the door. "I can't stay, thank you all the same. I'm glad it isn't you; but it must be somebody, and I've got to find out before——"

Lucy Adair returned to the clothing club accounts just as the Rectory gate shut. She still felt somewhat dazed. As she took up her pen, "I'm thankful," she reflected plaintively, "that I haven't got red hair, anyway."

Out in the lane Kit was desperately endeavouring to straighten out the situation and to decide on a course of action. If she went back to the cricket ground, she would meet Roddy Byrne, and that——

At this juncture Roddy Byrne came round a bend in the lane. He said: "We're still in, and the score's two hundred and eighty." And then: "I came to look for you."

"For me?"

"I saw you leave the ground while I was batting," he said. "Then I tried to see which way you went, much to Herrick's advantage. That was the end of my innings." He looked at her ruefully. "You've a lot to answer for."

Kit stared at him in bewildered indignation. The suddenness of the encounter had her at a disadvantage, but she was angrily aware that the Roddy Byrne whom she had upheld as a "good sportsman" and "one of the best" was evincing a disturbing lack of these qualities. Considering the undeniable existence of a Lucy—though it wasn't Lucy Adair, after all—who had fractured his heart so recently, and for whom she had stood proxy over the telephone, she didn't quite see why she should be blamed for his having been bowled, or why he should talk as if—as if——

She said rather coldly: "I don't know what you mean. It's—it's nothing to do with me."

"It's everything to do with you. When you rang me up this morning——"

Kit gave a little cry. Somehow, then, despite her efforts, he'd found out. Had the real Lucy, whoever she was, changed her mind? At all events, Roddy didn't look like a man with a broken heart.

"Why did you go away like that?" he demanded severely. "I saw you, and the

stumps just went crash. And this morning, when you talked to me on the 'phone, you told me you knew I'd play well—for your sake."

"I didn't! It was for Lucy's. I suppose you'll admit there is a Lucy? It isn't Lucy Adair, and it can't be old Mrs. Barnes."

"No," said Roddy Byrne gravely. "I shouldn't get bowled out because of old Mrs. Barnes. But what I should like to know is why you pretended."

Kit's grey eyes flashed. "Because it simply wasn't fair that a good cricketer should be spoilt because of some idiotic girl!"

"Oh!" said Roddy Byrne. He looked at her very hard. "But you can't call a myth idiotic, can you?"

"A myth?"

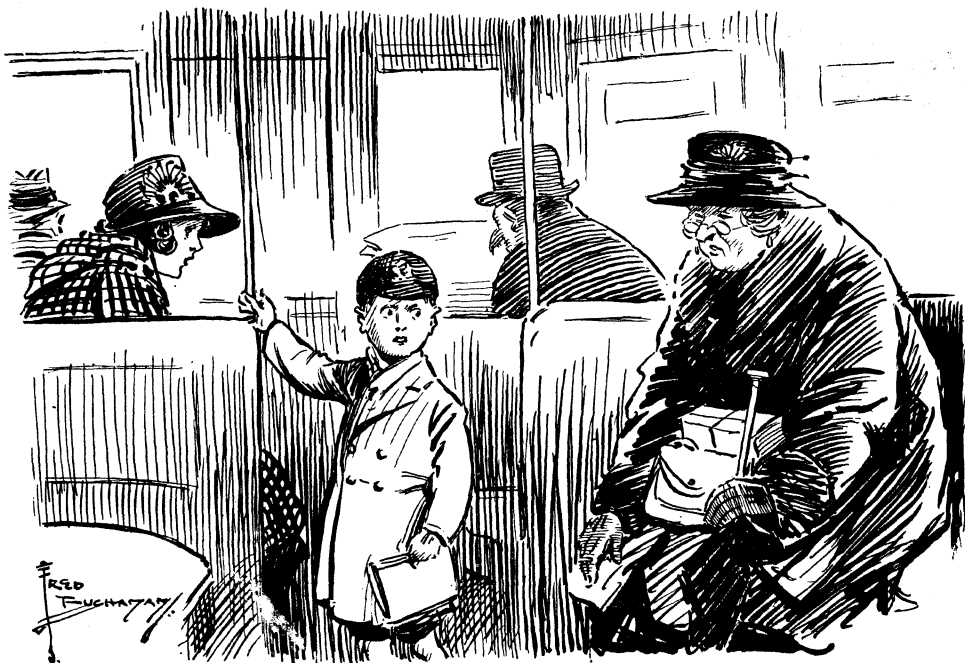
"A myth. Lucy was a myth. I don't know quite why I pitched on the name—I never thought of Lucy Adair. You see, when you rang me up I was getting pretty desperate. There were only four days left before you went away, and it didn't seem as if you'd ever—you know, you simply shut a fellow up before he'd got a chance. I wondered if—if you thought there was someone else, you'd—well, show whether it mattered to you. So I pretended that I didn't know it was you who rang me up. And then *you* pretended"—he laughed rather ruefully—"so that I'm not much the wiser."

Kit said nothing. She glanced away from him down the gold and green of the sun-and-shade-checkered lane, and felt strangely at a loss for words. The whole affair had somehow become provokingly absurd, but behind the absurdity was something else—something that for the first time in her acquaintance with Roddy Byrne made it difficult for her to meet his glance. After a long pause he went on—

"I know that it was in the interests of cricket, but—you said it four times, and each time it sounded better—almost as if you meant it."

"Oh!" said Kit. Her glance came back to Roddy Byrne's face, and then she knew what the "something" was. "This time, Roddy, darling, I do," she told him calmly.





THE APOLOGY.

"Did you apologise to that lady, dear, for stepping on her foot?"  
 "Yes, mother. I told her I was sorry she couldn't keep her feet out of the way."

## THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### NAMING THE HOUSE.

"I SUPPOSE now that I have got a house at last," Charles remarked, "I ought to call it something."

"Why?" inquired William. "Hasn't it a number?"

"Yes, but a name looks so much better on the notepaper. What do you think of 'Chatsworth'? There is a conservatory at the back, you know."

"Rotten!" said William. "Why not call it 'The Hovel'?" Charles glared. "Well, then, 'The Nook,' 'The Shanty,' or 'The Box.'"

"I know it's small," rejoined Charles, "but you needn't rub it in."

"What about 'The Cedars' or 'The Pines'?"

"But we have no cedars or pines within miles."

A light gleamed in William's eye. "Quite so," he shouted exultingly, "nor any banana trees, either! Why, man, there's a name ready-made for you! Call the place 'Yes, we have no . . .'"

Here Charles stooped to pick up a brick, and William fled for his life.

At a certain church in a remote country village the venerable vicar still maintained the old custom of kissing the bride after the ceremony. Now, one young woman who was about to be married in his church did not relish the prospect, and instructed her prospective husband to advise the clergyman that she did not wish him to kiss her. The bridegroom obeyed the instructions given, and she subsequently asked: "Henry, did you tell the vicar that I did not wish him to kiss me?"

"I did, Florence."

"What did he say?"

"He said that in that case he would charge only half the usual fee."



"WHY do you always drink China tea now?"

"Oh, my dear, I find it improves my Mah-Jongg playing so much!"



A LUCKY man in Vancouver recently found thirty-three pearls in an oyster patty. In some restaurant oyster patties the difficulty is to find the oyster.



MORE CLASS DISTINCTION.

"SOMEBODY ter see yer."

"A gentleman?"

"Shouldn't fink so—much about the same as yerself!"



CHILCO

REASON ENOUGH.

"My husband complains that there is no cream on the top of the milk."

"Well, I fills the jug so full that there ain't any room on the top for the cream!"

## MAY DAY.

'Twas the very first of May,  
A white and azure day,  
Though a little shower of rain was on the way.  
A dozen thrushes carolled  
On boughs with bloom apparelled,  
When strolling up the daisied hill came Harold.

And strolling down the hill  
Came flaxen-headed Jill,  
A cowslip basket on her arm to fill.  
Cupid's a Springtime ranger,  
But yet there seemed no danger,  
For each was to the other one a stranger.

A NEW leech discovered in Northern Uganda will, it is stated, hold on to a human being for two hours, and defy removal. We have known even this record to be exceeded by the teller of a golf story.



WATERCRESS and spinach are now being put up in tabloid form, so be prepared to hear the following restaurant dialogue:

"Bring me a chop, waiter."  
"Yessir! Any vegetables?"  
"No, thanks; I've brought my own."



SALESMANSHIP.

ASSISTANT: I've sold hundreds of these ties this season.  
THE COLONEL: Really! That's remarkably clever of you.

But clouds will sometimes lower,  
And down came such a shower—  
Both sheltered in the self-same leafy bower;  
And in that hawthorn tether,  
Perforce quite close together,  
They could not but discourse about the weather.

Which led to other themes,  
Till, stirred by sunlit gleams,  
They strolled together down that hill of dreams.  
Dan Cupid's work was o'er—  
Harold the basket bore  
On merry May Day, nineteen-twenty-four.

*Jessie Pope.*

GUSHING LADY VISITOR: How sweet to see the tender green of the young snowdrops pushing up through the brown earth!

COTTAGER: Yes'm, but what you're a-looking at is the autumn sown spring onions.



A MYSTERIOUS drug has been discovered in the Amazon region which gives people the power of describing events which they have not witnessed. But we have met lots of people who can do that without the aid of drugs.

## GADGETS.

By R. T. Lee.

My wife said it was "too stupid" of me to make such a fuss about a little thing that she asked of me, that everybody else wore them, and that when we had last dined out, she had felt quite ashamed to see the way my socks wrinkled round my ankles.

Perhaps I should explain that I am one of those people to whom "gadgets" of all kinds are an abomination. Safety razors always cut me, fountain pens make me even inkier than they do other people, pipes with complicated internal arrangements will not draw for me, and the detachable head of a patent collar-stud once fell into my soup at a dinner-party.

Still, you know what it is when one's wife sets out to smarten one up, and you can guess that the next day found me in a hosier's shop.

Now, when I go to buy something I am well acquainted with, I am a match for any shopman. If he had tried to sell me a pair of braces fitted with pulleys and tackle and what-nots, telling me they were "the acme of comfort," and would "conform to my every movement," I could, from experience, have told him that he was a liar. But when I go to buy something novel, I become a diffident, self-conscious idiot. The dominating haberdasher, after pinching my leg in a very forward way, informed me that he had the very article for "a peculiarly thin calf"—to myself I had always called it "a good leg for a boot."

And so it happened that I emerged from the shop dimly self-conscious of the under-development of my legs and the unwilling possessor of a pair of puce sock-suspenders, full-rigged with mainbraces, bobstays, and holdfasts, evidently designed by Mr. Heath Robinson.

Next day, when I started off with my wife to a tennis party, I must admit that my white socks, taut and trim, gave me a sense of superiority, slightly tempered, perhaps, by a vague fear that some of the lashings might not be made fast (I'm sorry about all these nautical metaphors; I don't know what induces them).

However,

All went well until the middle of the second game, when, in the throes of a rally, I had an awful sinking feeling beginning where my calf was missing and running down into my right ankle. I felt as if my trousers were—— (I hate to be indelicate, but that is the sensation conveyed when anything slips.)

I looked down and saw my shoe surrounded by an embarrassing puce halo. By a happy inspiration, I went into the bushes on the



"TO POINT THE MORAL——"

SMALL BOY (looking at picture of famous general): What has this soldier got all these medals for, mother?

MOTHER: For eating up all his crusts, darling.

pretence of looking for a ball, and matters were adjusted.

We lost the first four games through my resulting anxiety. My partner, a charming lady, in whose eyes I desired to look my best, exclaimed: "Now, then, partner, pull up your socks!"

"What, not again!" I murmured, with a hasty glance downwards; but this time the expression was merely figurative.



You know the swept and garnished appearance of the court when you have picked up all the balls preparatory to beginning a new game? Well, it was like that. My partner, in the act of serving, stopped short and, pointing with her racket, asked: "What's that?"

There in the middle of the court, alone and conspicuous in all its blushing pucity, lay my sock-suspender (left).

This time there was no hiding the fact. I picked it up, passing over the incident with the apt quotation: "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*" From the response to this *bon mol*, I fancy they must have heard the witticism before.

road, and was just in time to see my pretty partner dismount from her bicycle and pick up from the middle of the road two painfully lonely and obvious objects, of the ownership of which she can have had no doubt.

I have given up trying to suspend my socks.



Two women who had not met for years suddenly encountered each other on a train.

"How do you do?" said one effusively.

"Now, this is delightful," said the older of the two. "Just to think that you knew me



THE BEST BASIS.

NEW CHARLADY: Yes'm, I generally gets on very well with the ladies I obliges. In fact, they all says I treats 'em more as a friend than a charwoman.

I did not play any more that afternoon, and eventually my wife and I started for home. We had only gone a short way when we saw our tram waiting at the terminus; but, covering the intervening hundred yards at a run, we caught it and sank into our seats on the top.

The first words my wife uttered, when she had recovered her breath, were: "Oh, just look at your socks!"

It was too true. The pair of them had assumed a look of awful depression round my ankles, and the suspenders had vanished.

As the tram started I looked back along the

after so many years. I can't have changed much. Really, I feel flattered."

"Oh," quickly explained the first speaker, "I recognised your hat!"



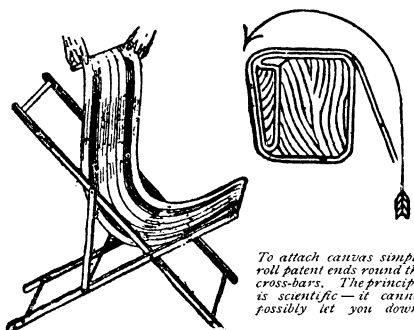
MRS. CALLAHAN observed one evening to her husband: "Me sister writes that iviry bottle in the box we sent her was broken. Are ye sure ye printed 'This side up with care' on it?"

"I am," replied Mr. Callahan. "An' for fear they shouldn't see it on top, I printed it on the bottom also."

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Night-light glows,  
have pleasant dreams  
and sweet repose*

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To save matter at end.

**CAMOUFLAGE.**

*By Harry Marter.*

This morning I received an order for a short humorous article. "Something to make people laugh," the Editor wrote. "Only do try to be original. Quite a number of people have read, and still read, Mark Twain."

Of course, this is all moonshine on the Editor's part. I am the most original writer since the author of Cleopatra's Needle laid aside his chisel and hammer. And not only am I original—I am also quite funny when you get the right perspective. My wife says so, and she should know. She sharpens her pencils with my razors.

But the Editor has me beaten this time. All day long I have been striving to think of something funny, and I can't do it for nuts, love, or money.

My position is analogous to that of the clown who warbled the pathetic ditty "Ring down the curtain!"

No, I can't write anything humorous to-day, though you may have noticed that for yourselves. I've got the *flu*. There you have it—the reason, not the flu, I hope. If any man can be funny when he has a bad attack of the flu—except in appearance, of course, and my wife mightn't like it if I invited you all round to have a look at me—he hasn't got the flu, that's all.

I am a very determined sort of fellow, and not easily beaten. Why, once, in my boyhood's days, with a key, full directions, and the confidence of youth, I even embarked on the opening of a tin of sardines. The key retired from the contest quite early on in the proceedings, taking the directions with it. Then it became a wrestling match—catch-as-catch-can, no hold barred; kicking, biting, and stabbing all in order; seconds out, no favour, and may the better man win—between me and that tin; and even the confidence of youth grew "groggy" before the end. No quarter was sought or offered, and neither dreamt of asking for an armistice.

And I won!

Well, when I say I won, I can scarcely claim to have got both its shoulders on the mat. I hooked the sardines out all right, though the tin was never what one could call open. It put up a great show, and on "points" certainly deserved to hold its own. When my study mate saw the sardines on a dish, he declined to partake thereof,

protesting he never had been partial to raw mincemeat.

I tell you this only so that you may know the kind of chap I am. Yet to force myself to be funny, with the flu, is beyond even me. To begin with, I am in bed, and I hate bed at meal-times. Secondly, I am practically blind. Thirdly, partially paralysed. Fourthly, my temperature melted the thermometer, and my temper is ten degrees higher. Fifthly, I



MUCH THE SAME EFFECT.

JONES: Ah, that reminds me—the laundry hasn't sent my collars home yet!

am all of a shivery-shake, like a jelly in an earthquake. Sixthly, I don't care if it snows. Seventhly, or sizzles. Eighthly, this is a rotten world. And, ninthly, oh, please, let me die!

I wouldn't put pen to paper again if it weren't for the fact that quinine costs money, and that doctors cannot live on oxygen alone.



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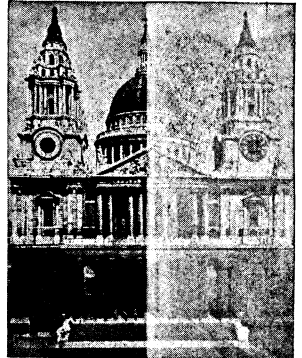
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My wife has just come in and picked up these pages as I flung them on the floor.

"I didn't know you had a letter from an editor this morning, dear," she said, "except that printed slip with the returned MS., of course."

"That's right," I growled. "Go on, tell everybody! As a matter of fact, I hadn't. Can't you see what the thing's called?"

And in case this should be thought an insufficient justification for the title, I hereby inform all whom it may concern that this is a humorous article, camouflaged with the flu.



A NATURALIST announces that he has kept a butterfly alive since January 24. But it still has to endure the rigours of an English summer.

#### THE HOMING INSTINCT.

Do you know those distressing people who, as soon as they start on a holiday, begin to worry about coming home?

I met one in the train the other day. She was being "seen off" by a friend, and this was the burden of her conversation:

"I suppose I can't reserve my seat for coming home? What a bother! But I shall send my luggage in advance.

"I shall wear my blue serge costume for coming home in. I hope it will be a fine day; I hate coming home in the rain.

"I mustn't lose the return half of my ticket; and I'll ask about the time of the train for coming back as soon as I arrive, to make sure."

"Well, good-bye for the present, dear; I'm quite looking forward to coming back."



NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.

CONDUCTOR: Charing Cross, sir? Yes, change at Oxford Circus!

McDOUGALL: Na, na, ye don't, laddie—Ah'll hae me change the noo!

THE lady plumber, says a weekly paper, has arrived. Not a bit like our gentleman plumber; we sent for him last winter, and he hasn't arrived yet.



#### A SONG OF MAY.

Oh, may I sport my new felt hat,  
My latest suit of tender grey?  
I think—the sun is shining—that  
I may.

Oh, may my gloves of pearly kid  
And new white spats now see the light?  
I thought just now—indeed, I did—  
They might.

But sunny moments quickly pass,  
The rain pours down, the skies are grey—  
For you're a fickle month, alas!  
O May!

Leslie M. Ogler.

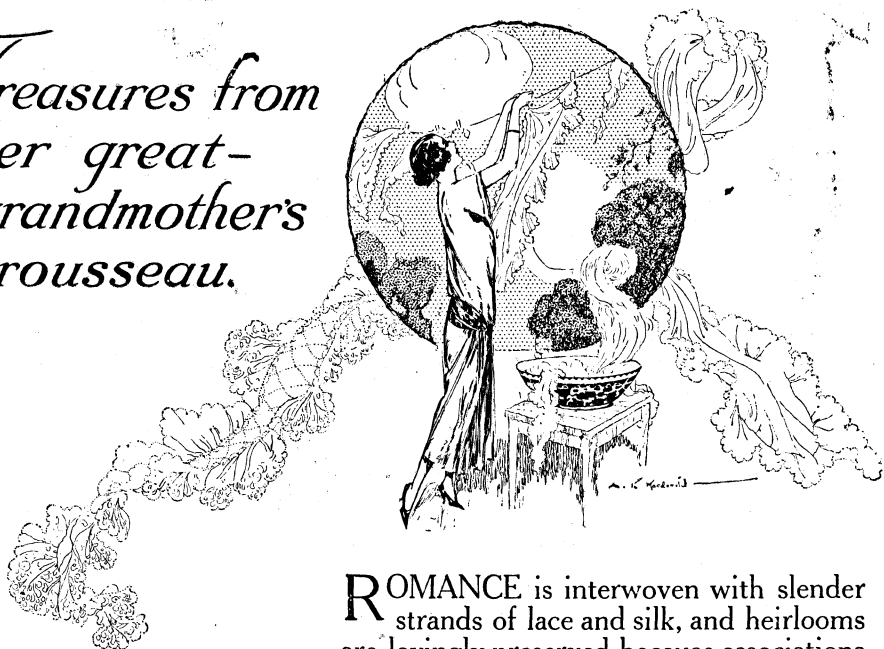
#### COMMERCIAL MUSIC.

DARIUS MILHAUD, a Parisian composer, has produced a new work for voice and stringed instruments founded on a page from a seedsman's catalogue. The only wonder is that it has not been done sooner, for no one can work in so many poetical adjectives to the square inch as the horticultural merchant when he is really trying his best. Only to listen to him describing a special brand of pears as "soft, juicy, tender, and of a rich, musky flavour," is an epic in itself.

We hope that our musicians will also turn their attention to the bulb catalogues which reach us in such profusion from Holland. Some of them contain sufficient material for a whole comic opera libretto.

When this rich mine has been exhausted, there remain the pleasing tasks of setting to music some of the ornate passages in Bradshaw's Railway Guide and orchestrating the Stores list.

*Treasures from  
her great-  
grandmother's  
trousseau.*



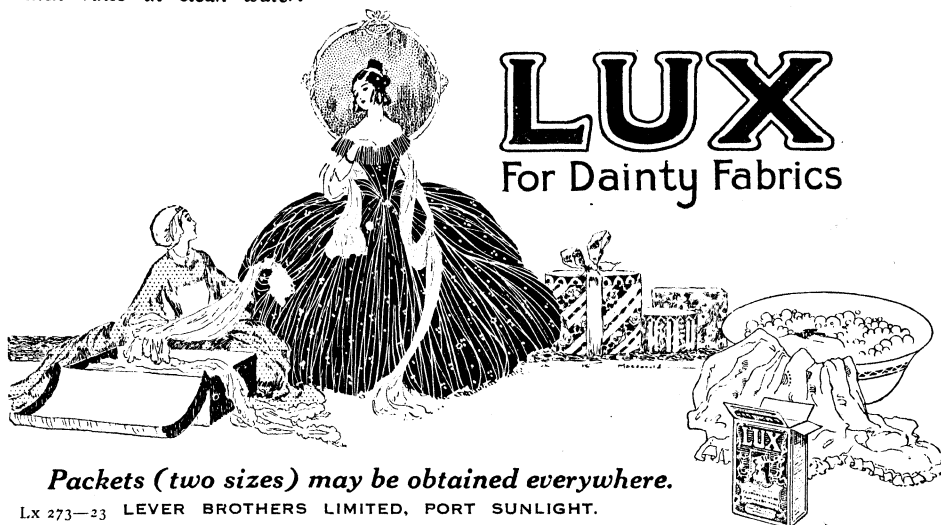
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